



DECEMBER TAX NOTICE & LEGAL CHALLENGE

BULYEA, SK.—After 4 months, termination of the administrator, a government inspection, ignoring a legal challenge from a large group of ratepayers on 2018 tax notices, installation of a government appointed Supervisor to oversee Council activities, five, day-long, secret meetings on the budget and the Minister's approval of new division boundaries, RM of McKillop Council has FINALLY mailed 2018 tax notices. Most ratepayers began receiving the notices the week of December 17th.

In a public meeting on November 23rd, Council reduced the significant tax increase on the residential class and distributed the tax burden somewhat more fairly across all ratepayers in the RM. The tax increase in 2018 is still, by normal standards, outrageously high—between 14-31% increase—but given that we're at month 12 of 12, it's as our Gram used to say, 'better than a kick in the teeth' (which is what Council gave us in August with the first round of tax notices).

Dashboard Changes to December Tax Notices

- DECREASE of effective residential mill rate from 9.89 to 5.63 (property with a taxable assessment at \$300,000 was taxed \$1,287 in 2017, \$2,967 in August 2018, now \$1,689).
- REMOVAL of the \$850 base tax on properties with residential improvements (e.g. land with house or garage).
- INCREASE of effective agricultural mill rate from 8.58 to 9.75 (increase of approx. \$103 per quarter section crop land valued at \$160,000).
- INCREASE of minimum base tax on vacant property to \$525 (was \$420 in 2017, \$300/acre in August 2018).
- INCREASE of effective commercial mill rate from 7.72 to 11.58.
- Garbage tax remains at \$250 per property with an improvement.

What's the Status of the Legal Challenge?

The purpose of the legal challenge was to reduce the outrageous tax increase ratepayers received in August. We have decided to NOT continue in Court trying to lower the current tax increase, which is still substantial (between 14-31%), as it would not be cost effective given our rising legal costs and the low probability that we'd get the RM to reduce the taxes any further given their significant 2018 spending.

We are requesting the Court to order the RM to pay our solicitor-client costs as the legal challenge brought was for the benefit of all ratepayers in the RM even though only 400 of them participated and paid for the legal action to secure the lower and more fairly distributed taxes. The end result should be that all ratepayers are put in the same position whether they directly participated in the challenge or not. A group of 400 should not bear the burden of the expense incurred for the direct benefit of 1,800. That cost should be shared in the name of equity. After ignoring our Court application, requesting 2 adjournments and refusing to accept any of our offers to settle (while not providing any counter-proposals), RM Council on December 10th voted in a public meeting to defend the position of the RM in Court and request the RM be awarded costs from the ratepayers who mounted the legal challenge. Stay tuned.

Get Out and VOTE in February 27th RM Election

Although most RM 220 ratepayers may feel a sense of financial and emotional relief when opening the new December RM 220 tax notices, let's not forget why the 2nd tax notice was necessary.

If Council had not mismanaged the RM, and if (over 400) ratepayers had not initiated a legal challenge of the tax bylaws, we have NO DOUBT Council would have done nothing to fix the outrageous residential tax increase. RM Council resisted all attempts to come to an early resolution and waited 2.5 months before trying to fix the MESS they created.

The result is a significantly higher tax burden that is somewhat more fairly distributed (Why does the RM need a huge increase in taxes collected in 2018 compared to last year?). RM 220 taxes are still substantially higher than other RMs. Let's not forget that GOOD GOVERNANCE by our publicly elected Council would never have created this tax nightmare in the first place. **VOTE for a NEW, IMPROVED RM Council in the NEW, IMPROVED electoral boundary divisions in February 2019.**

Should I Pay My 2018 RM Taxes?

Taxes are due by December 31st, 2018 ~Two weeks from date of mailing.

Late penalty is 1% per month compounded in 2019. Council did not extend the due date or provide pre-payment discounts.

Some ratepayers have suggested they will not pay 2018 taxes until after the February 27th election. They would rather pay the late penalty than hand over their hard earned money to the current Council responsible for the 2018 tax fiasco and its ongoing overspending.

The Rural Municipality of McKillop No. 220 lies along the east shore of Last Mountain Lake, north of Lumsden. There are 732 permanent residents and approximately 2,000 ratepayers in the RM. The RM 220 RPA is a citizen's group dedicated to ensuring fair taxes, minimizing waste, reducing spending, and holding RM Council accountable.

If you have any questions or can help please contact us at rm220rpa@gmail.com, www.rpa220.ca or visit us on Facebook