

QUASH THE CRAZY TAX INCREASE OR WE'LL SEE YOU IN COURT!

On Thursday September 13, 2018 RM Council was sent a demand letter from the law firm MLT Aikins. Excerpts from the letter can be found below in italics and in full on the RPA website at www.rpa220.ca

We represent a very large group of ratepayers within the RM of McKillop No. 220 who are very concerned about the financial management in the rural municipality. The imposition of an onerous and discriminatory tax on residential property holders magnified the problem.

In short, this letter requests that RM Council take the following actions:

Quash the 2018 Tax Bylaws and Consult on Alternative Approaches

We believe that the current tax increase is flawed from a procedural and a substantive perspective. We are prepared to seek the assistance of the Minister [of Government Relations, Hon. Warren Kaeding] and the Courts to rectify these mistakes should we not receive the immediate cooperation of Council in quashing the bylaw and coming up with an alternative tax solution such as a one-time special levy that is equally distributed.

Appoint Forensic and Management Auditors

In an effort to save the time and money of ratepayers...and increase the accountability and transparency of the RM, a forensic and management auditor must be appointed by Council.

A forensic audit would clear up all of the questions for everybody involved, including the Council and there is no reason to force the ratepayers to spend any more time or money to secure an audit [via another petition] when one is inevitable in any event. Please consider such an appointment immediately and we are prepared to work with you in terms of the execution of the audit.

The timeline for positive action from RM Council is presented in the letter below.

As set out above, legal remedies are available to the ratepayer's of McKillop. Failure on the part of Council to comply with these requests will result in legal action in the Court of Queen's Bench. We are prepared to discuss cooperative solutions that work for both Council and our clients, but we would need full transparency and cooperation very quickly. If a positive response to this letter is not received by Friday September 21, 2018 we will initiate court proceedings without further notice.



Join the Legal Action to Quash the Tax Bylaw

Securing a law firm to get RM Council to listen to ratepayers is an action that was not taken lightly. As many ratepayers know, we have tried sending delegations to Council meetings, letter writing campaigns, petitions for public meetings, audits and boundary changes, have sought media support and have submitted RCMP complaints. The majority of this RM Council will not listen nor do they care.

This tax bylaw which was hastily done without consideration of all options increases the 2017 tax levy by 176% in 2018, places the tax burden primarily on one group of ratepayers and is contrary to the public interest. The significant increase in taxes is resulting in a heavy financial burden on some ratepayers while at the same time destroying the value of their properties.

The legal firm would like clients to withhold RM taxes until December 31st, 2018 (the actual due date) as a minimum. Joining this legal challenge will provide some protection for contributors (clients) from the RM putting property liens against their properties for unpaid taxes entering 2019.

The minimum cost to join and support this legal action against RM Council is \$250.00. We recognize that this amount will be a hardship for some. If you would like to participate but can't afford this amount, please contact us. If the situation is resolved before all the money is used, prorated refunds will be made to all who participate.

For more information, or to join the legal action, please contact Devon Hack at devon@thehacks.ca

UPDATES ON RM COUNCIL & RATEPAYER ACTIVITIES

1. On August 22, 2018, the Minister of Government Relations ordered an inspection into the affairs of the RM of McKillop. Due to the level of issues in the RM it was considered necessary to appoint Carol Ingham as Inspector. The Inspector's report was due September 15th. The inspector will review matters and key RM documents and files from 2016 to the present, relating to: petitions; legal actions taken by or against the municipality and high level financial synopsis. She will also inspect the appropriateness of the directions, actions or inaction of any employee or agent of the RM or member of Council for the RM relating to the above matters.
2. It was stated in the Minister's order that the Inspector's report can be disclosed to members of Council but is not to be disclosed publicly without the Minister's approval. On behalf of the ratepayers involved in the legal action to quash the RM's tax bylaw, the law firm MLT Aikins will be requesting a copy of the investigator's report from the Minister if the RM Council does not make the report public to its ratepayers.
3. Despite notice in January 2018 that an application would be made to Court of Queen's Bench to quash the RM Council bylaw which gave away half of the RM asset Fox Point (17 acres of lakefront property) and a court date of September 20th, RM Council hosted a celebration of the land transfer on Saturday September 8th in Bulyea. This was a last minute change from the advertised date of September 1st. No notice was provided of the date change on the RM website. However the ratepayer group McKillop Taxpayers Network sent out an email to their distribution list announcing the change.
4. A petition submitted to RM Council to hold an advance poll in Regina for the upcoming municipal election on October 24th and referendums was deemed sufficient by the Acting Administrator. Location and time of poll TBD.
5. On Wednesday September 6th, Councillors LaBatte and Kuderevko hosted a focus group of 14 ratepayers from across various demographics in the RM (agricultural, lakeshore and business). The meeting was held to discuss current municipal issues. A written report was submitted that requested RM Council resign and a forensic audit be conducted. After hearing the report Reeve Arndt asked if the participants were named and commented that without names the report was unsubstantiated and disregarded the report and ratepayers' contributions to this RM in crisis.
6. At the RM meeting of September 10th, the Acting Administrator requested that, if ratepayers have any errors on their property assessment or tax notice, they contact her to review and, if necessary, revise.
7. The RM office in Bulyea is now open to the public 5 days a week. For the last 10 months the office has been closed to the public for the majority of the workweek with staff working behind locked doors.
8. Upon Court order, a motion was passed at the August 27th RM meeting to have ballots for two referendum questions for the upcoming municipal election and advance polls.

Referendum #1 "Should the Council of the RM of McKillop No. 220 pass a resolution to request the government of Saskatchewan to **alter the divisional boundaries of the RM of McKillop No. 220** in accordance with the proposed boundaries drawn on the map that accompanies this ballot? YES/NO"

Voting YES to change the current 108 year old boundary would trigger an election in ALL 6 divisions and division boundaries that more fairly represent the current distribution of ratepayers in the RM.

Referendum #2 "Should the Council of the RM of McKillop No. 220 pass a resolution to **explore options** to give hamlets the ability to have self-government and control over their administration, taxation, zoning and bylaws, if they so choose, **without alteration to the division boundaries** as they exist today? YES/NO"

Voting NO would tell Council that ratepayers will not permit Council to stall any longer on this 108 year old boundary issue and a more equitable distribution of division boundaries. In any event, Council has been 'exploring' those options for almost 3 years and has taken no concrete action.



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