



MEDIA RELEASE

"THE VOICE OF MANITOBA FARMERS"

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Provincial Budget Eyed for Property Tax Relief *Distributed by the Education Financing Coalition*

Winnipeg – The Education Financing Coalition will be watching the provincial budget delivery closely tomorrow to see if the Manitoba government has heard the resounding call to shift education taxes off the property tax bill. The province has an opportunity to seriously start the shift in this next provincial budget being released March 8th, say coalition leaders.

"The message is getting louder and louder. The province needs to address this incredible inequity where only people who own property pay for one of our most cherished services - education," says Lorne Weiss one of the coalition members and Chair of the Political Action Committee of the Manitoba Real Estate Association.

"Not every Manitoban owns property, yet property owners are expected to pay for the lion's share of education funding. Something as important as education - like health care - must be supported by all of us and paid for from the province's general revenues," says Weiss.

Weiss, David Rolfe President of Keystone Agricultural Producers and Graham Starmer, President of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce are three of the 200,000 Manitobans who've joined the Education Financing Coalition, a coalition of 40 different organizations calling on the province to fund more of education through general revenues.

Rolfe says the most glaring example of inequity for Manitoba farmers is that their property tax bill is completely unrelated to their ability to pay.

"Farmers consistently pay more in education taxes than their non-farming neighbour, regardless of the farm economy," says Rolfe. "Owning farm land or buildings does not necessarily guarantee a higher income, but farmers are stuck with a higher bill."

Starmer says the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce don't expect the Doer government to find a full solution to this multi-million dollar expense overnight.

"We do expect the government to start to seriously address it now that we're the last province in the country that relies so heavily on property taxes to fund education," says Starmer.

The Citizens For Education Funding Reform, also a member of the coalition, has created an information website with an email letter to send to The Premier and the Minister of Education. (It can be found at www.schooltax.net)

Weiss, Rolfe and Starmer will be in attendance at the Manitoba Legislature Tuesday when the budget is delivered and will be available for comment.

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