

WHAT A DRAG IT IS GETTING OLD ONE REP'S PERSPECTIVE

Whether one agrees that school boards should have the right to tax, or that the province should be the sole funder for education – the current structure is what we have. School boards tax property owners to fund education in Manitoba.

Sure, the Province kicks in a large amount of funding as well, but the school divisions cannot survive without a steady stream of property tax income. Every spring the divisions face difficult decisions at budget time, and ultimately, they do raise taxes. Generally speaking, the increases are not drastic, nor are they popular. But this is the cost of educating the children who will one day be our leaders and income earners in our society.

This is why I must point out that the Seniors Tax Rebate is a detriment to Manitobans. This is not how our society is supposed to operate. In Canada, we have a fundamental belief that Canadians take care of each other. Our concept of Universal Health Care is evidence of that. Granted, there are those who would prefer the American model of “every man for himself” or “survival of the fittest”, but generally speaking, these mantras are incongruent with being Canadian.

What the Senior Tax Rebate does in effect, is move us to a user pay model and creates inequities in society. It also risks the education of future generations. Let's examine these points more carefully.

Educated people create a far better society than a society of uneducated masses. It is our responsibility as tax paying Canadians to see that future generations receive quality education so that they can lead us in the future. The options are clear - educated people are less likely to commit crimes and are much more likely to have higher paying jobs. Both lend themselves to a better quality of living and make economic sense.

Without a strong education system, there will be even more poverty, which will lead to more desperation, more crime and more reliance on the social safety net. The reason I raise this point, is because the senior lobby has argued that because they no longer have any children in the school system, why should they have to pay school taxes?

This argument is flawed on so many fronts. By this logic, why should the healthy have to pay higher taxes to care for the sick – many of whom are seniors? Why should those who do not drive have to pay higher taxes for road infrastructure? And I can go on and on. This is what I mean by a user pay system. I am happy to pay school taxes even though I do not have children because it is the right thing for our society. Without such tenets, we will lose our way as Canadians and will move towards being America.

The Senior's Tax Rebate is a very conservative methodology, although it was brought in by the NDP. Someone will have to explain that one to me one day. The new Pallister Government has modified the rebate so that it is only available to low income seniors -

which is a very socialist thing to do. Someone will have to explain to me how this happened too. Not that I am complaining. It is definitely a step in the right direction.

The senior demographic is a large demographic in our population, and it is a growing one. Anytime you create legislation that excludes them from paying their fair share of taxes will have a budgetary effect that will impact jobs in the sector, and our economy.

If seniors, or citizens in general, have an issue of how tax dollars are spent in school divisions, or in any other sector, then the remedy is vote those officials out and elect those who you believe will do better. Saying you do not want to pay taxes is not an option. Responsible citizenship and due diligence and transparency from government is the path to follow.

Abdicating one's responsibilities by seeking and getting an exemption from taxing will have a greater harm than benefit on society. Some will say my opinion is based on protecting school sector support workers. There is some basis to this and I do not apologize for it. However, it is both support workers and teachers that build a better future for all Manitobans by insuring quality education, and that is justification enough for my argument.

This is one Rep's perspective...

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