

DoKURA NEWS

October 2016

2016 ANNUAL MEETING

The association held its Annual Meeting Sept. 22, 2016 at the Pellatt Community Hall.

Two key items were discussed. The ongoing Provincial Land Tax reform and switching to a vote-by-mail process for the 2018 Kenora District Services Board election for representatives from the unincorporated areas.

The PLT Review has been underway since 2012-2013 and over the past three years a number of consultation sessions have been held, public input invited and tax rate changes made.

The PLT office has released several public reports to date, most recently in late August. It summarized responses to a spring survey of PLT area residents. Two findings were that a majority of those responding favoured tax changes.

- 57% in total and 77% in school board areas wanted the two-tier residential PLT rate addressed. Following tax rate changes in 2015/2016, residential properties in school board areas now pay \$212 per \$100,000 of assessed value, while those outside school tax areas pay \$75. Previously it was \$162 and \$25.

- 91% agreed with the statement PLT increases for businesses should be the same or greater than residential increases.

Business and industrial class properties pay a lower tax rate than residential properties – \$119 and \$134 per \$100,000 of assessed value respectively following the 2015/2016 increases. Further changes to the PLT are expected in 2017 and DoKURA will continue to monitor the issue and provide input whenever possible.

Background papers, reports and other information on the PLT Review are posted at the Ministry of Finance's PLT site:

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/consultations/landtaxreform/>

DoKURA

LOOKING OUT FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE RESIDENTS
FROM THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS IN THE DISTRICT
OF KENORA

VOTE-BY MAIL

Utilizing a vote-by-mail process for the election of unincorporated area representatives to the Kenora District Services Board is the second initiative the association continues to work on.

District Social Services Boards are responsible for administering a number of social programs and in most cases land ambulance service across Northern Ontario. A share of the costs – primarily for land ambulance and social housing – are assessed against property owners through municipal taxes and the PLT. For those paying PLT, service board levies represent approximately 1/3 of the total tax bill.

Municipalities appoint elected council members to the boards, while unincorporated areas (Territory Without Municipal Organization – TWOMO as it is termed by the government) elect their representatives by public vote at the same time as school board and municipal council elections. Of the 10 District Services Boards in the province, nine now use vote-by-mail. Three of the boards have multiple wards for their TWOMO representatives.

The stumbling block for the Kenora District has been our Ward boundaries, which do not neatly match property numbering codes used by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation. Past attempts – in 2010 and 2014 – to generate a useable mailing list for voters produced lists that were too inaccurate. MPAC continues to work on the problem and the association has offered to assist where possible.

The key benefit of vote-by-mail is increased voter participation. While voter participation in District Services Board elections is not large, those districts using vote-by-mail report ballot returns of up to 10 per cent. By comparison, Kenora District votes using polling stations, when they have been needed, have had less than a 1% participation rate.

2017 BOARD ELECTIONS

Elections for those members of the board of directors whose terms of office end this year were held as part of the Sept. 22 AGM.

The nominating committee was unable to find any new members interested in serving on the board, however all current board members and officers agreed to let their names stand.

Officers and directors for 2017 and their terms of office are:

Executive

Bill Blower – Past President

Jack McKenzie – President 2016/2017

Vice-President – Gord Dingman 2017/2018

Treasurer – Irene Kember 2017/2018

Secretary – Bob Stewart 2017/2018

Directors

Ray LeRay – (Oxdrift) 2016/2017

Phyllis Hannon – (Oxdrift) 2017/2018

Ken Pride – (Lake of the Woods North) 2016/2017

Barry Baltessen – (Lake of the Woods North) 2017/2018

Irene Kember – (Lake of the Woods South) 2016/2017

Gord Dingman – (Lac Seul) 2017/2018

Bill Deschamps – (Lac Seul) 2017/2018

Kenora District Service Board Representatives

Mark Sobchuk – Lac Seul – to 2018

Ray LeRay – Oxdrift – to 2018

Bob Stewart – Lake of the Woods South to 2018

Barry Baltessen – Lake of the Woods North to 2018

In their nominating committee report Mark Sobchuk and Gord Dingman noted that while they had been unable to find anyone new willing to serve on the board, those they talked to expressed support for the association's work and the need for unincorporated area residents to have a voice in government policy decisions impacting them. The association continues to look for new board members, including someone to speak for and

represent unincorporated area residents to the east of Ignace including the Pickle Lake area. The DoKURA executive consists of a mix of members elected for two year terms on a rotating basis, along with the four publically elected ward representatives to the Kenora District Services Board, who serve for their four-year term on the KDSB.

The association's main function is to represent the concerns of unincorporated area residents – both year round and seasonal – to various levels of government.

For non-service board members the time commitment is not huge. The board meets twice yearly, with one meeting coinciding with the AGM. Most communication between board members is done via email and telephone.

If you are interested in serving on the board, or would like more information please contact association president Jack McKenzie at: lawsouth@hotmail.com or by telephone at 548-4069.

HYDRO UPDATE

In its September Throne Speech, the provincial government announced it was taking steps address concerns over high electricity costs. One is a rebate equal to the provincial share of the HST – 8% of total bills. The rebate is to begin Jan. 1, 2017 and will be given to all residential, farm and business customers using less than 250,000 kWh a year.

A second measure is increased support for year-round residents currently receiving support through the province's Rural or Remote Rate Protection program. This program currently provides a \$31.50 per month reduction in delivery charges for R2 class customers of Hydro One, and for eligible customers served by Algoma Power and Five Nations Power.

Those eligible must use their properties as a year-round residence. Currently the program covers about 350,000 households.

While exact details on the new support haven't been announced, government statements suggest it will result in an increase in RRRP support to about \$60 a month.