

# DoKURA NEWS

Winter 2017

## GOING DIGITAL

Most of you will be receiving this News Letter via email, the District of Kenora Unincorporated Area Ratepayers Association voted at the 2015 annual meeting to switch to digital distribution for the bulk of its notices – news letters, meeting notices, etc.

The move was made to reduce costs and make it easier to remain in touch with the those on our mailing list. If you had this newsletter forwarded to you by someone else, or received it via standard letter mail, please contact us with a current email address to ensure you continue to receive information from the association

[dokuraorg@hotmail.com](mailto:dokuraorg@hotmail.com)

## DoKURA

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

## PROVINCIAL LAND TAX

The province released another information paper in December 2016 on its ongoing Provincial Land Tax Review titled A More Equitable and Modern Provincial Land Tax. The paper outlined new rates for 2017, background on 2015–2016 rate changes, and results from ongoing consultations.

The full report, along with earlier reports can be viewed online at:

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

For those paying the PLT the key changes for 2017 are a \$20 per \$100,000 increase for residential property within school tax areas and \$40 per \$100,000 outside school tax areas.

Farm and Managed Forest properties continue to be taxed at 25 per cent of the residential rate that applies in their area.

For business property owners, the increase is nearly \$50 per \$100,000 of assessed value and going forward business and industrial properties will be taxed at the same rate. The report also set an ultimate target of \$250 per \$100,000 of assessed value, meaning a further \$18 per \$100,000 increase can be expected in 2018 or 2019.

Still to be decided by the government is whether the non-school area residential rate will be brought up to the school area residential rate, and whether there will be further increases, equalization in non-residential rates.

The chart below itemizes recent tax rate changes.

Property Class	2014	2015	2016	2017	Target
Residential: Inside School Board	.00161727	.001717	.002117	.002317	.002500
Residential: Outside School Board	.00025393	.000354	.000754	.001154	Not stated
Commercial	.00054436	.000694	.001344	.00183	Not stated
Industrial	.00039189	.000542	.001192	.00183	Not stated
Pipeline	.00190290	.0002453	.004803	.004803	Not stated

Note 1: In 2014 the outside school board residential rate was 15.5% of the Inside rate, as of 2017 it will be 50.2%

Note 2: The government froze PLT rates for 2014 at 2013 levels at the start of the PLT Review, previously the rate had been adjusted downward during each reassessment cycle based on the average province-wide assessment increase in the PLT area.

To estimate the impact on your own property, simply multiply the 2017 PLT rate by your 2017 assessed value (detailed in notices mailed by MPAC last June).

For Example: A \$350,000 property inside a school zone will be levied  $\$350,000 \times .002317 = \$810.95$ .

Overall, the province anticipates collecting \$26 million in PLT revenue in 2017, to help co-fund the \$65 million to \$70 million it currently pays on behalf of unincorporated areas for services such as OPP policing; social service board levies – primarily land ambulance and social housing; public health and provincial contributions to Local Roads Boards, Local Service Boards and local fire protection.

This represents a 40% support rate, a considerable change from 2013 and earlier when local property tax support was roughly 15%.

Coupled with direct levies and fees to Local Roads and Service Boards and volunteer fire departments, it means unincorporated area property owners now cover about 50% of local service costs through property related taxes, this is similar to the average for small rural municipalities across the province.

# HYDRO CHANGES

The province has announced two measures to address the high cost of electricity, a growing concern in both rural and urban areas across the province.

The measures, which take effect January 1 are an eight per cent credit on total bills, and an increase in the Rural or Remote Rate Protection program credit. The eight per cent credit covers all residential, farm and small business customers and is meant to offset the amount of provincial sales tax collected under the HST, which the province applied to electrical bills beginning in 2010. Individual savings will depend on the amount of your monthly bill, but are estimated to be \$11-\$12 a month for an average residential user.

For year-round customers served by Hydro One who are in the R2 class there will be an additional \$29 a month credit under the Rural or Remote Rate Protection program. The program is meant to offset the generally higher cost of providing service in rural areas. The previous credit, incorporated in delivery costs on monthly bills was \$31.50 per month.

There are other initiatives underway that will also impact bills going forward.

One is the conversion of local utility delivery rates – currently a combination of a fixed monthly charge and a per kilowatt/hour charge – to a full fixed charge.

For Hydro One customers in this area this is an eight-year process that began last year.

For year-round customers in the R2 class the change is reflected in a \$7.84 increase in the monthly fixed charge for 2017, with a reduction in the per kwh charge. For seasonal customers, the fixed charge is increasing \$3.98.

The overall targets by 2024, based on current rates, are \$128 a month for year-round customers, less the Rural or Remote Rate Protection credit (\$60.50 as of 2017, meaning a target of \$67.50 a month); and \$60 a month for seasonal customers.

How much of a savings, or increase customers experience with will vary depending on the amount of power used.

Grid transmission and connection charges, also part of distribution costs on your bill, will continue to be charged on per kwh basis. This charge is currently just over one cent per kwh.

In general, the change won't have any great impact on average users, but will mean an increase of several hundred dollars a year for low-volume users – primarily seasonal customers who don't use their properties in the winter months. And a savings of several hundred dollars a year for high volume customers – especially those using electrical heat.

## DoKURA

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

## VOTE BY MAIL INITIATIVE

DoKURA is continuing to work towards having a vote-by-mail option available for the 2018 Kenora District Services Board elections, similar to that now in place for school board elections.

Discussions with the services board to have our association act as the election agent for the vote, as has been the case since the board was formed in 1998, is underway. And the association is maintaining contact with the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation in moving towards providing a useable voters list.

The Kenora District Services Board is the only remaining such board out of 10 in Northern Ontario still using polling station voting to elect its unincorporated area members. Municipal members are selected by individual councils.

Using vote-by-mail, a growing trend with municipalities and school boards, offers the opportunity for greater voter participation. Especially in this region where over half of the eligible unincorporated area voters are seasonal residents, and not in the area on voting day. Past Service Board votes, when required, have generally had voter participation of less than one per cent. Based on the experience of other service boards and school boards using vote-by-mail, this could increase to 10 per cent or more.

While still well below voter levels in federal, provincial and municipal elections, it would represent a significant improvement over the current system.

## DoKURA FUNDING

DoKURA has no membership fee, membership is open to all in the Unincorporated Areas of the Kenora District. It receives no regular government funding and its directors serve as volunteers, efforts are made to keep general operating costs under \$1,000 a year.

But there is a need to cover costs for sending representatives to meetings with various levels of government to promote and/or defend issues of local concern. That's where you can help, as an individual or community group, through a voluntary donation to the association. Donations can be sent to: DoKURA, Box 1245, Keewatin Post Office, Kenora, Ontario P0X 1C0