

DoKURA NEWS

Spring 2019

DoKURA UPDATES

Welcome to the Spring 2019 newsletter for DoKURA (The District of Kenora Unincorporated Areas Ratepayers Association).

Over the winter the association has continued to work towards its key objectives of improving communications between unincorporated communities in the District and promoting a better understanding of the unique problems each area faces.

TAX GRAB FEARED

Is the City of Kenora planning a boundary expansion? That's a question unincorporated area property owners in the Kenora area were asking themselves after a city delegation to a provincial pre-budget consultation session in January asked the province to re-visit the question of significantly increasing Provincial Land Tax rates, and transferring some of the revenue to the city to offset service costs.

While the city does not provide direct services to the unincorporated areas, city officials argued they incur costs related to roads, social and recreational services and development on behalf of non-city residents. The full text of the city's presentation can be read at https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees/finance-economic-affairs/parliament-42/transcripts/committee-transcript-2019-jan-21#P393_78281

In part of the presentation, they pointed to the lower rate of property taxation in unincorporated areas, asserting residents there paid \$40 per \$100,000 of assessed value compared to a city rate of \$1,255. News articles on the presentation resulted in several Letters to the Editor in Kenora media and to the mayor and council pointing out the city provides no services to unincorporated areas, the province had firmly rejected the idea of transferring PLT taxes to neighbouring municipalities at the outset of the lengthy PLT Reform process completed in 2017; and that property tax rates in unincorporated areas are much higher than \$40 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

DoKURA director Barry Baltessen met with several senior city staff in early February to discuss the issue of city vs

rural taxation and they would not or could not provide any financial analysis to support their argument of unfunded services provided to unincorporated areas, and remain convinced the province can be persuaded to change its mind on allowing municipalities to access property tax revenue from adjoining non-municipal areas.

Directors will continue to monitor the situation and keep members informed on any developments.

2019 TAX RATES

In step with the Provincial Land Tax rate increases outlined in provincial regulations following the 2017 PLT Review, PLT rates for 2019 will be \$242 per \$100,000 of assessed value this year for school tax areas and \$195 for non-school areas. Increases of \$5 and \$40 respectively. The non-school rate will be phased out by 2021, with residential properties paying the same \$250 per \$100,000 of value.

Non-residential property rates are also increasing.

<u>PLT Rate changes/per \$100,000 of assessment</u>			
Property Class	2018	2019	2021
Residential (School)	\$237	\$242	\$250
Residential (Non-School)	\$155	\$195	\$250
Commercial	\$215	\$247	\$300
Industrial	\$215	\$247	\$300

Education tax rates – under Ontario Regulation 400/98 – have also been set for the year with the residential rate set at \$161 per \$100,000 of assessment, down from \$170 in 2018 to help offset assessment increases. Rates and levies for Local Roads Boards and Local Service Boards are generally set later in the year by those boards.

Provincial property tax bills mailed in March are calculated at 50 per cent of 2018 total bills.

The final bill in mid-summer details the rates and total for the Provincial Land Tax and, if applicable, Education, Local Roads Board and Local Service Board levies.

911 SERVICE

After five years of hard work, residents of the unincorporated townships of Pellatt, Pelican, Umbach and Gidley to the west of Kenora now have 911 service. Volunteers working with the PPUG Local Services Board completed the work of installing over 1,000 blue property identification signs in the late summer and early fall of 2018 and the system went 'online' in December. In addition to fire calls for the Pellatt United Firefighters, the system handles ambulance and police service calls. For further information visit www.puffire.com.

Meanwhile, the KeeMan Local Services Board – which extends from Kenora to the Manitoba border with fire service provided through the McKenzie Clearwater Fire Department – continues to work towards bringing 911 service to its 2,500 properties. For information on the project visit www.keemanlsb.ca

COVERED RINK

By next winter the community of Minaki expects to have a steel-framed building erected to enclose its outdoor rink.

In March, it was announced the Ontario Trillium Foundation would be contributing \$150,000 towards the project, which is being undertaken by the Minaki Community Association.

The association said the upgrade will allow the rink to be used in various weather conditions and for a variety of uses beyond ice skating in the winter months for the approximately 700 year-round and seasonal residents of the Minaki area.

DIRECTORS AT WORK

Board of directors members continue to work with various groups/organizations in the area providing input on the concerns of the unincorporated areas. Bob Stewart serves as a DoKURA representative on the All Nation Health Partnership. In addition to its ongoing efforts to increase doctor numbers in the Kenora area and access to health care services, the ANHP has applied to create one of the province's proposed Health Teams for the Kenora area. Preliminary involvement continues with the Lake of the Woods District Hospital on planning for a new All Nations Hospital. Mark Sobchuk attended the February meeting of the Kenora District Municipal Association and Irene Kember the spring meeting of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association.

The District Association meeting dealt solely with

municipal concerns, reports Mark. Risk assessment and risk management was one item of discussion at the meeting. Presentations were made by MP Bob Nault, MPP Sol Mamakwa and Henry Wall of the Kenora District Service Board.

Irene notes topics that may impact DoKURA residents discussed at the meeting of Northwestern Ontario municipal mayors and councillors were restructuring of the provincial health systems and infrastructure investments including expansion of broad band internet and cellular phone service in the region.

Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, was one of the speakers at the three-day conference and spoke about expansion of natural gas service, including service to unincorporated areas, as well as road and housing projects in the region.

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

DoKURA continues to look for people – year-round or seasonal residents – from the unincorporated areas interested in serving on, or working with the board.

The DoKURA board makeup allows for two directors from each of its four wards or areas, Directors At Large are elected (two each year) at Annual General Meetings and serve two-year terms, the district's four publically elected Kenora District Service Board members serve as the second director for each ward or area and serve for their term office on the KDSB.

If you are interested in serving or working with the DoKURA board please contact us at dokuraorg@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP

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

<http://www.dokura.com> / dokuraorg@hotmail.com