

WRAFT and CAPTR are encouraging electors to write to their local MPP and the Minister of Finance to persuade the Liberal government to modify its current policy in this regard prior to the October election.

New Democratic Party The NDP task force held hearings across the province on the assessment system, and they have recognized the need to end its volatility and unfairness. They have proposed a **freeze position until a property is sold.**

Progressive Conservatives Their leader announced that, should their party form the next government, they would impose a **5 per cent cap on annual assessment increases as long as the individual continues to own the property.** This reflects some of the earlier recommendations of both WRAFT and CAPTR. It is somewhat ironic that this positive response to the concerns of shoreline residents on this issue is an initiative by the same party that introduced the market value assessment in the first place.

Summary

The policy platforms announced to date, and the party and local candidate track records, lead to the following conclusions:

- **Track record of the current Liberal government** **Current value assessment:** Its approach to dealing with this issue does not appropriately address the issue of property tax inequity; simply put, the Liberal government has failed to fix it.
Water Quality: Since Ontario borders all but one of the Great Lakes, the primary responsibility for the quality of their water is that of our Province. Recent media reports quoted the Premier as stating that "*the Great Lakes have slid to the back of environmental concerns.*" Shoreline residents agree – the leadership of the current government on the issue of water quality, particularly as it affects Lake Huron and the Municipality of Bluewater, has been insufficient.
- **Property tax equity** The concerns of Bluewater shoreline residents on this issue are better addressed by the announced platforms of both the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. Although neither of their proposals address the present inequity resulting from the most recent assessments, both would prevent the situation from becoming worse. Both proposals have the effect of limiting the degree to which tax burdens can continue to shift to properties with increased market value, but the PC proposal may be more realistic since it allows some growth in assessed value.
- **Track record of local candidates in the Huron-Bruce riding** BSRA has made our incumbent **Liberal** MPP aware of the concerns of shoreline residents on these issues; factors contributing to the lack of positive results would include the policy positions of her party. The **NDP** candidate was not sufficiently responsive to identified concerns on either of these issues during his 6 years on Bluewater Council. The **PC** candidate's extensive experience in local politics (South Huron Mayor and Huron County Warden) has included involvement with water quality issues at the County level.

2007 Property Taxes

Of your total taxes, 47.73% is levied by Huron County; 32.09% by the Municipality of Bluewater, and 20.18% goes to school boards based on a provincially-determined mill rate which was unchanged this year. Although assessments are frozen this year, new growth has resulted in an increase in total assessment. As a result, both the County and Bluewater were able to limit rate increases to 2.26% and 0.81% respectively, notwithstanding a higher rate of increase in their total budgets. The combined effect of these three rates is a residential property rate of **1.308269 %** – an **increase of 1.33%** over 2006 rates. To calculate your taxes, multiply your property assessment by this percentage. The balance yet to be paid this year will equal this total, less the interim installments paid to date.

BSRA has previously documented that the shifts in tax burden over the past several years are the direct result of the current value assessment system. Municipal budget data reveal the continuing shifts in tax burden within Bluewater, reaching new highs this year with respect to the following:

- The portion of total tax burden borne by the **residential ratepayer** is now up to **84.3 %**.
(“Farmlands” - only 8.7 %; all other classes - 7.0 %).
- **Shoreline residents share of Bluewater "residential" taxes** has now risen to **48.15 %**.
(Bayfield - 21.95 %; other 4 wards combined - 29.90 %)
- **Shoreline "residential" taxes** now represent **40.58% of Bluewater tax revenues from all tax classes**.
(Including Bayfield "residential", the share is 59.08% of taxes from all sources.)

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