

Hello,

I am a 75-year old BC citizen and as the local elections draw near, I wanted to submit some information to you and other potential candidates for council in your municipality.

The "Community Charter" under which all municipal governments operate, provides the authority for municipal councils to allow "exemptions" from payment of property taxes for certain and specific properties. The properties involved typically include those owned by charity organizations, churches, religious organizations, places of public worship and golf courses. Each time an exemption is granted, the reduced tax revenue must be absorbed by all property owners in the municipality.

As we all know the world is changing. Charity organizations are growing – this generally is a good thing. While charity organizations are often supported by the general public, churches and religious organizations are not, rather they are supported by their congregation members. About 25% of the total public and a huge majority of young people do not support religion. The Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches have recently been exposed as perpetrators of abuse, especially with indigenous children in schools. Even as administrators of the schools as appointed by the Federal Government, these so-called trustees, abused the very children they were entrusted to protect. This was recently confirmed by Pope Francis and The Archbishop of Canterbury. Both these so-called leaders admitted guilt and publicly apologized for what had been done.

Is it sensible that these abusive organizations simply be allowed to walk away from taking responsibility for what they did? Newfoundland has already started the process with the seizure and sale of 42 Roman Catholic properties: <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/42-catholic-properties-sold-to-pay-abuse-survivors-at-former-newfoundland-orphanage-1.5992800>

If you want the young vote, read these comments of a friend of mine: ***"I am a 29-year-old single homeowner working professional. I recently learned that there is property tax exemptions for churches and other religious establishments. I do not understand why this exists anymore. Maybe 50 years ago sure. Personally, i do not know anyone that uses these facilities. In this age of technology, tax exemptions for property should be given to those who need it. It's time for the churches to either pass the torch of freeloading to a more deserving (and scientifically proven) concept or start paying for the space they are using."***

While it would be a small step forward, municipalities have the ability to eliminate the exemption for paying property taxes on properties owned by the churches, religious organizations and places of public worship. Termination of this exemption must apply to all.

Candidates in the upcoming municipal election can take a stand to bring this about.

After reading and understanding the approach taken in Newfoundland, I contacted the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and asked if the BC Community Charter could be changed. I received a response from the Ministry. It states "Local governments put forward resolutions for debate at the UBCM Annual Convention and those resolutions that receive widespread support from local governments and are endorsed by the membership are communicated to the provincial government for a response."

By your municipality bringing this issue to the next UBCM Convention, the process could begin.

Sincerely,
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