

ALBERTA

Victory!

CTF helps push province to cap assessment appeal fees

This past fall the City of Calgary moved to significantly increase the fees non-residential property owners would pay to appeal their property tax assessments.

The city hiked their fees from \$50 to a fee based on 1 percent of taxes payable, citing a need to cut down on frivolous



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appeals.

However, it seems the real problem was actually incorrect assessments. A remarkable 70 percent of appellants in 2007 received a property tax reduction.

Regardless, the percentage based fee meant that some property owners might see their filing fee jump from \$50 to the tens of thousands of dollars. In fact, Calgary's highest assessed building, the Petro-Can building, would have had to pay \$115,000 just to appeal their assessment. And, many smaller businesses would be forced to pay at least \$10,000.

Your CTF joined a coalition of groups determined to fight these outrageous increases to appeal fees. We spoke out during city council committee meetings and took our fight to the province. Although the City of Calgary refused to reverse course, they did eventually cap fees at \$5,000.

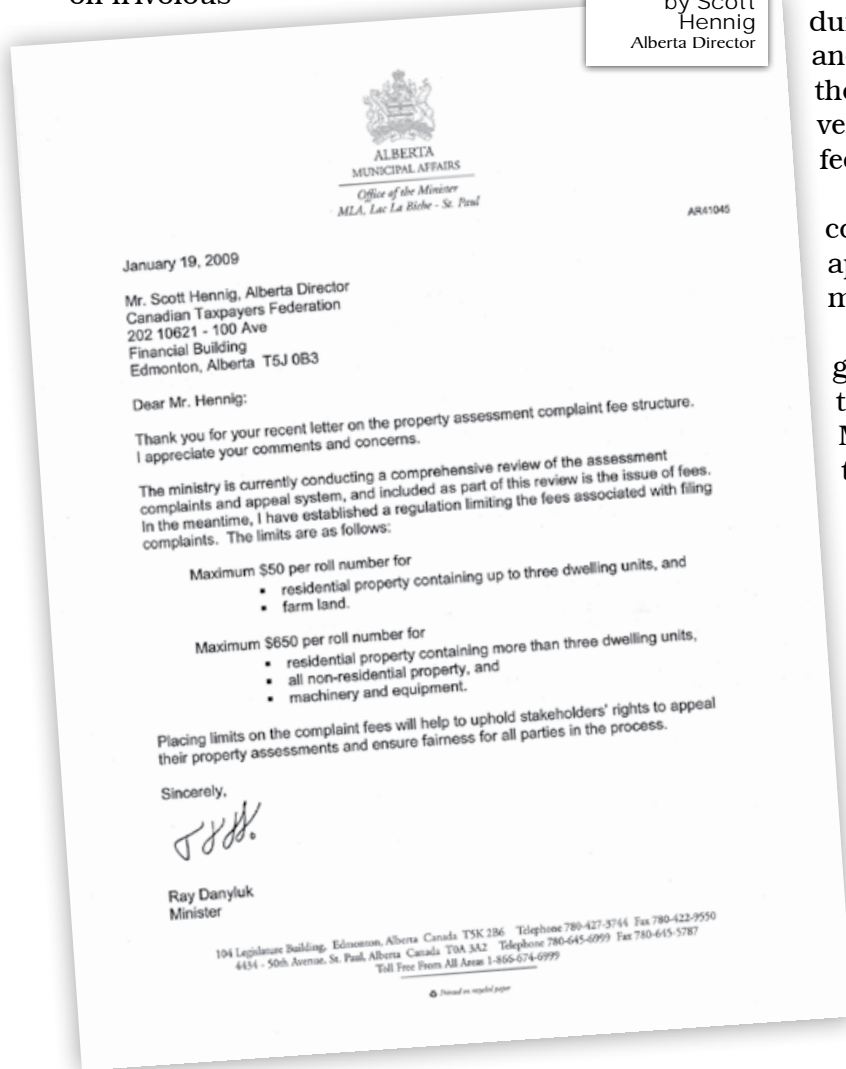
Unfortunately, Edmonton's city council followed suit and raised their appeal fee from \$500 to \$5,000 to match Calgary's.

Knowing this appeal fee rip-off was going to sweep across the province, the coalition implored the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Hon. Ray Danyluk to cap the fees.

In January, Minister Danyluk agreed with the coalition's concern and capped assessment appeal fees province-wide to \$50 for residential properties and \$650 for non-residential properties.

This cap will protect both homeowners and businesses alike from money-hungry councils all across Alberta. ■

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Budget 2009

Taxpayers hold on to your wallets



In what has become an annual tradition, your CTF recently sat down with Finance Minister Iris Evans to provide feedback regarding the upcoming provincial budget.

The potential for deficit budgets, tax increases, or a drawdown of savings is a big concern.

Given that Alberta spends more per-capita than any other Canadian province, the right choice should be spending cuts. Spending increases approaching double-digits can't continue into the future.

As such, your CTF recommended a prescription to cure Alberta's over-spending and addiction to resource revenues. ■

CTF Recommendations:

- Cut current program spending levels by 7 percent to avoid a deficit budget;
- Introduce legislation to permanently limit annual program spending to the combined growth rates of population and inflation.
- Pass legislation barring any in-year unbudgeted spending, with the exception of declared emergency and natural gas rebate (Sustainability Fund) spending.
- Pass legislation specifying an annual minimum of non-resource revenues to go towards savings, measured either by dollars or as a percentage.
- Pass legislation requiring the *Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund* be inflation-protected each year.
- Implement a guideline for capital plan spending of a minimum of 0.9 percent and a maximum of 1.5 percent of the provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP), measured by the average of the previous two years.
- Amend or repeal sections of the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Act*, the *Health Care Protection Act* and the *Hospitals Act* to allow Albertans the right to purchase private health insurance from private health providers.
- Reduce income taxes through an increase in the Basic Personal Exemption or a reduction in the 10 percent single-rate.
- Eliminate the hidden sales tax and health levy on insurance.
- Fulfil the original promise to businesses by reducing the general corporate income tax rate to 8 percent.
- Amend the *Taxpayer Protection Act* to require a provincial referendum be held prior to increasing or adding any new provincial tax.
- Do not grant any further taxing powers to municipalities unless they are first approved in a local or provincial referendum. ■



Alberta director Scott Hennig presents CTF budget recommendations to Alberta Finance Minister Iris Evans