

# Minister's Message



**E**ducation tax on agricultural land has been a longstanding issue for Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers. Addressing this issue was a major campaign commitment for our government in the 2007 election. In the 2009-10 budget, we kept that promise.

A new system for education funding was introduced as a result of extensive stakeholder consultations and recommendations by Jim Reiter, Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education (now Minister of Highways and Transportation) and MLA for Rosetown-Elrose.

Under the new system, the province is setting education tax mill rates, rather than the school boards, as was previously the case. On agricultural land, the rate has decreased to 7.08 in 2009, and will be reduced to 3.91 in 2010.

To ensure education is properly funded, the provincial government is increasing funding to school divisions by \$241 million this year. This will result in the province funding 63 per cent of the operating costs for pre-kindergarten to grade 12 education in 2009, up from last year's level of 51 per cent.

This new education tax structure will result in considerable savings for most farmers and ranchers. As an example, with the 2008 taxable assessment of \$298,100, 10 quarters of cultivated land in the RM of Winslow would have had an education tax bill of \$3,403 in 2008. In 2009, the education tax on the same land would be \$2,364. In 2010 it will be \$1,306. In this case, the land owner would save over \$2,000 (61.6%) by 2010.

The majority of residential and commercial property owners will also pay significantly less education tax.

With these changes, I believe we have achieved a fairer balance for education funding and addressed one of farmers' and ranchers' most longstanding grievances.

I want to wish everyone all the best for a safe and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Bjornerud".

Bob Bjornerud  
Minister of Agriculture