

***Attention: Reporters covering education, business, and local government matters.***

# **News Release**

***This news release has been issued by a coalition of twelve organizations including education, municipal governments, business, agricultural and citizen groups. A complete listing of the coalition membership can be found at the end of this news release.***

*For Immediate Release*

*May 6, 2003*

## **Enough is Enough! Education Property Tax Levels Unsustainable *Coalition Challenges Parties to Find Alternatives***

Organizations representing education, municipal governments, business, agricultural producers and citizen groups today joined voices to call upon all political parties and candidates to make Manitoba's over-reliance on property taxation to fund education a priority issue in the upcoming provincial election.

At the heart of the group's concern is the steadily increasing reliance on property tax as a mechanism for funding public education. In 1981, the provincial government funded 82.4% of public school operating costs; by 2003, the provincial contribution has dropped to 57%. The difference between what the province funds and the actual cost of operating schools is made up largely by property owners through the school division's local property tax, the Special Levy. "School division Special Levies are now providing almost forty cents of every dollar needed to pay for the salaries, utilities, supplies, and other costs that keep our schools running, and recent reductions in the provincial Education Support Levy have not changed that fact," noted Garry Draper, President of MAST.

Coalition members believe that education, like health, is a core provincial responsibility and that all Manitobans benefit from a strong and effective public education system. The cost of operating Manitoba's public schools must be shared by all. Property ownership per se is not an indicator of wealth and education property taxation at current levels is neither equitable nor sustainable.

The coalition is seeking a firm commitment from Manitoba's political parties to take immediate action that will eliminate the need for further increases in the Special Levy, without reducing programs and services for students. Anticipating a fall report of the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance, coalition members are also calling upon Manitoba's legislators to identify and implement a longer-term strategy that will dramatically reduce Manitoba's reliance on property taxation as a mechanism for funding education.

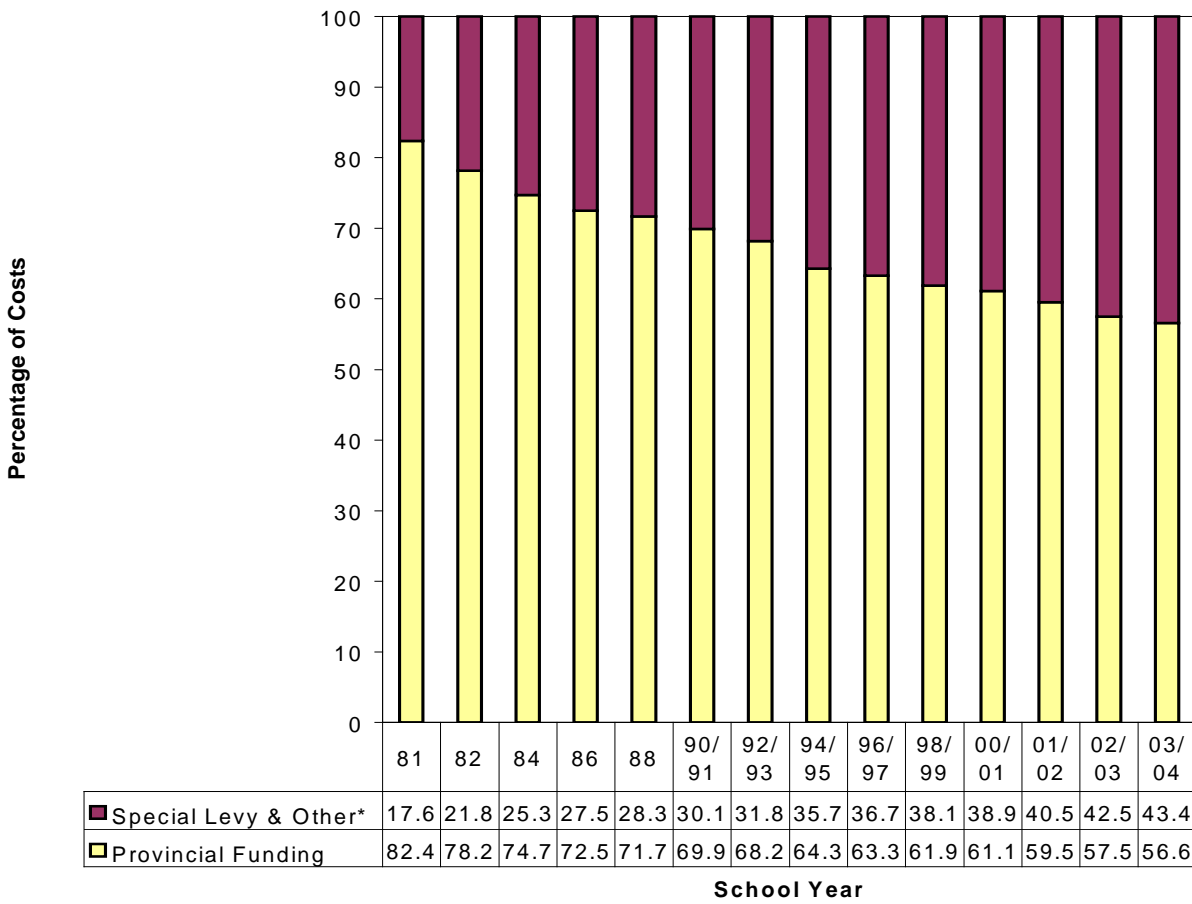
Stuart Briese, President of AMM, called the present level of property taxation in support of education unsustainable. “Our reliance on property taxes as a source of funding for education has been growing for more than two decades, and we have reached a crisis point. Homeowners, farmers, and businesses can simply no longer afford to bear the load. We need to find a solution that will keep our education system strong without placing such enormous strain on Manitoba’s property owners.”

***Please see the graph on page 3 for an historic overview of sources of funding for education in Manitoba.***

For further information, please contact any representative of the coalition organizations as indicated below.

<b><i>Participating Organizations</i></b>	<b><i>Contact</i></b>	<b><i>Phone Number</i></b>
Manitoba Association of School Trustees	Garry Draper Carolyn Duhamel	204-838-2135 or 981-3511 (cell) 233-1595 or 782-6690 (cell)
Association of Manitoba Municipalities	Stuart Briese	204-857-2366
Manitoba Association of School Business Officials	Kevin McKnight	204-523-7531
Manitoba Cattle Producers	Betty Green	204-372-6492
Keystone Agricultural Producers	Weldon Newton	697-1140
Citizens for Education Funding Reform	Sandi Knight	204-274-2421
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents	John Carlyle Guy Lacroix	667-7130 204-878-4713
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg	Sid Frankel Wayne Helgason	943-2561
Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce	David Angus	944-8484
Manitoba Chambers of Commerce	Graham Starmer	948-0107
Winnipeg Real Estate Board	Peter Squire	786-8854
Manitoba Real Estate Association	Lorne Weiss	955-7544

### Source of Funding of Public Schools, 1981 to 2003/04



\*Other sources of revenue account for between 3% and 5% of total operating revenues.