



# Questions and Answers about tax declaration January 2009

## Introduction

This four-page document was created to answer some of the common questions that arise when taxpayers are determining to which school board they pay their education property taxes.

It is noted throughout that declaration of property taxes depends solely on the faith of the property owner. It is not a matter of choice, personal preference, where one works or where one's children attend or have attended school.

If you would like more information about any aspect of property tax declaration, you may contact Dr. Donald Lloyd, Superintendent, Administrative Services, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. Phone 659-7021 or email [dlloyd@gscs.sk.ca](mailto:dlloyd@gscs.sk.ca)

## Overview

In areas where both public and separate school divisions exist, the education portion of property taxes is automatically directed to the public school division unless the taxpayer indicates the taxes should be paid to the separate division.

For this reason, it is important for Catholic taxpayers to ensure that their tax notice reflects they are Catholic school supporters. The city, town or rural municipality in which they live will then direct their school taxes to the Catholic school division. As noted above, tax dollars for other taxpayers are automatically directed to the public school division.

If you are Catholic, in order to have your taxes support the Catholic school board you must fill out a tax declaration form and submit it to your municipal or RM office.

The tax declaration form is available at your local city hall, RM or municipal office. The question of which school board the taxes support should be based only on the religious faith of the taxpayer.

Property taxes are an important source of funding for all school boards, which also receive provincial government grants. These grants increase or decrease depending on the total value of the property the board is allowed to collect taxes on in its communities. This system ensures stable funding for all school boards.

## School Division Amalgamation and Taxation

On Jan. 1, 2006 several Catholic school divisions joined together to form a new, larger St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division #20. The division, commonly known as Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, consists of the communities of Saskatoon, Biggar, Humboldt, and Viscount.

As well, rural Catholic school divisions were formed in fall 2006 to serve the areas around Aberdeen, Clavet and South Corman Park. They also amalgamated with the former Saskatoon Catholic division and are now part of Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools.

The school board now consists of 10 trustees and includes representatives from all of the communities now served.

In the rural areas, our expanded school board has given an official voice to those Catholic families whose children were already attending Saskatoon Catholic schools.

Under provincial law, all Catholic residents of these areas can now specify, or officially "declare," that the education portion of their property taxes be directed to the Catholic school board.

### Questions about tax declaration

**QUESTION:** How do I change my property tax declaration?

**ANSWER:** You must fill out a tax declaration form. These are available at your RM or town office or city hall. On the form, you will be asked to supply your name and address. It also asks that you answer Yes or No to the following question:

*"I am a member of the minority religious faith that established the St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division #20."*

Completed forms can then be returned or mailed to your RM or municipality. Ratepayers should note that filling out the form is a one-time process. It does not need to be filled out annually.

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**QUESTION:** Can someone who is *not* Catholic pay their taxes to the Catholic school board if their children attend or have attended Catholic schools?

**ANSWER:** No. The allocation of property taxes is based exclusively on the faith of the property owner(s). It is not a matter of personal choice, preference, business, employment or where one's children attend or have attended school.

**QUESTION:** If I'm Catholic, am I *required* to pay my taxes to the Catholic school division?

**ANSWER:** Once a person states on their tax declaration form that they are Catholic, their taxes must go to the Catholic school division if one exists in their RM or municipality. There is no choice offered.

It is legally required by the Saskatchewan Education Act that where two publicly funded school divisions co-exist, property owners who are of the minority Catholic faith pay their taxes to the Catholic school division.

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**QUESTION:** What if I'm Catholic, but my child has gone to a public school for years. Can I direct my taxes to the public school division?

**ANSWER:** A Catholic person who confirms their faith on their tax declaration form cannot do this, according to the Education Act. In order for the taxes to be directed to the public school board, the individual would have to state on the tax declaration form that he or she is not Catholic. This is essentially a matter of conscience for the taxpayer.

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**QUESTION:** Won't the public school board in my community have less funding if I pay my taxes to the Catholic school board?

**ANSWER:** School boards are funded by a combination of property taxes *and* provincial government grants. These provincial grants increase or decrease depending on the total value of the property the board is allowed to collect taxes on. If a board receives less funding from property taxes, the size of the provincial government grant will change to take this into account.

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**QUESTION:** How are property taxes directed if one property owner is Catholic and one is not?

**ANSWER:** The property taxes can be directed to two different school boards. The amount directed to each board is based on the owner's share in the property and whether they declare on the tax declaration form that they are Catholic.

For example, if a husband and wife are equal, joint owners of their property and one of them is Catholic and confirms that on the form, 50 per cent of the taxes would be paid to the Catholic board and 50 per cent to the public board.

**QUESTION:** I am Catholic and live in an area near Saskatoon where a Catholic school division was recently set up. Do I need to change my tax declaration?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Catholics living in the areas covered by the rural Catholic boards that amalgamated with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools should contact their RM to change their tax declaration. This will ensure their property taxes are paid to the Catholic school board now representing their area. This is especially important **because any undeclared property owner will be deemed a public school supporter.**

Property tax owners whose taxes were directed to the former Catholic boards in Humboldt, Biggar and Viscount do not need to change their tax declaration.