

Mr. John Walstad

July 22, 2013

North Dakota Legislative Council

Mr. Walstad,

As the elected Finance Commissioner for the City of Williston, I am sending this communication in response to our valuation notification requirement recently passed in the 2013 Session. This requirement is another burden we suffer under as a community with oil boom impacts. This extreme pace of growth thrust upon us by the industry development will naturally have extreme impacts on our valuations. If the intent of this legislation has a purpose, then the requirements to attain the purpose should be logical in the process. As to the valuation process this requirement is tied to, we have no control over the sales market driven by the development boom, or the process for valuation compliance set up by State law. As for the City of Williston, our mil values increased 53% last year, but we only took a 3% increase in property tax dollars levy. We decreased our mils to not be excessive in citizen's tax burden. If the purpose is to force local tax subdivisions to not spend anymore than the previous year, and subsequently pass on the significant property tax relief intended by the Legislature, then the requirement for notification should be tied to something that can be controlled by the local elected Boards, such as a proposed mil increase, or request for actual dollars increase in levy, not the valuation process where these elected Boards have no control in the process. As you can see, these things look good on paper and sound good on debate, but are costly to implement in terms of staff time, printing costs, and postage. Please pass on to the Interim Committee that as Finance Commissioner, I share their goal of property tax relief, but also do not want to incur unnecessary costs intended to place pressure on local elected officials into compliance. We are also elected by our Citizen's on four year cycles. The public has every right to assess and determine if we have been responsive to their concerns and vote their beliefs in every election. I think we have been very judicious, and would encourage further debate and Legislative change consideration to this requirement in the next Session.

Respectfully,

Brad Bekkedahl,

Finance Commissioner, City of Williston

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