

**“STOP THE HARRIS TAX GRAB! WHY WON'T HE LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE?”**

**Address by Councillor Michael Walker  
April 15, 1998**

This meeting is called tonight because as you all know, Market Value Assessment (MVA) is back!! And believe me when I tell you that it is more noxious and malignant than ever!!!!

On Monday March 23<sup>rd</sup> at North Toronto Collegiate in my Ward, we held the biggest public meeting on any local issue in the history of North Toronto...and on Oscar Night no less!

They were big meetings because this is a big issue. Let me tell you why.

In 1991, we had a referendum on the issue of MVA when the Metro Toronto Government tried to impose it on the City. In an overwhelming majority, you voted NO. No way MVA!

Then again in November of 1997, we had another referendum to delay the implementation of this

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government's version of MVA – Current Value Assessment (CVA). 84% of voters voted to delay it. Once again an overwhelming statement of solidarity. You voted no – No way CVA!!

So, this means that our first problem is that the top brass at Queens Park isn't listening. Ernie Eves isn't listening; Al Leach isn't listening; and Mike Harris certainly isn't listening.

The main reason we are here tonight friends...is to make them listen. As I look across the broad city scape, I see the gathering storm. At the eye of this storm is a real tax revolt.

As we meet tonight, Toronto faces its greatest crisis ever. Call it Current Value Assessment. Call it Market Value Assessment. Call it Actual Value Assessment. Whatever you want to call it, it has put your neighbourhoods and residents at ground zero – You face the one of the megacity's worst tax hits. This tax is a cancer on our City, and Mike Harris has brought it out of remission.

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While tax increases for business are now temporarily capped, this is just a stall. The government wants the tax hit on small business delayed until after the next election.

This is a government that can't pass a hornet's nest without taking a poke at it. It is reckless, it is arbitrary, and let's hope by next year, that it's history.

In three months, tax bills will go out across Ontario. And not just for the second half of 1998. No. They are for the entire year. They will be retroactive right back to January 1, 1998.

I believe that if every city knew what we know, the government would be forced to back down.

But few cities have the impact numbers, few cities have tax rates. The mayors are afraid to give them out, because the Province says the numbers are soft, the tax rates could go up.

Right here in Toronto, residential taxpayers are now being told the tax rate is not 1.24%, it's really 1.40% on residential property.

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But in July, everyone will know. You can't hide the tax rate on a tax bill. If Mike Harris and his inner circle are starting to quiver now, just wait until July. There will be rolling thunder right across the Province.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to propose – a four point action plan.

- First, until May 31, the assessment roll is not final. The government could back off CVA even now. They will if they are listening – if we make them listen. Call Mike Harris, call Al Leach, call Ernie Eves, - and don't forget your local MPP's. If everyone in this room were to go home this week-end and fax one letter to each of these people, hundreds of angry letters would be awaiting those politicians when they walked into work on Monday morning.
- Second, let's get behind the motion I am moving along with Councillor Betty Disero. There is a way to ignore Current Value Assessment: use the old 1997 assessment roll and the old 1997 mill rate. Then nobody gets a tax increase.

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- Third, whether CVA goes ahead or not – but especially if it does – get involved in the referendum debate about to start at Queens Park. Convince Mike Harris that democracy cannot wait until after the next election. We need a referendum now.
- Fourth, let's use the democratic rights we still have. Let's talk to the opposition parties. Let's encourage them to listen when they build their election platforms. Let's tell them – NO WAY CVA!!!!

We have some important allies in our fight against this tax grab, including Mr. Paul Pagnuelo and Mr. Brian Kelcey, the past and present directors of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I also salute Mr. Michael Opara of the Toronto Property Tax Freeze '98. These people have the contacts we need City and Province-wide. I urge you to speak with them and give them your phone numbers if you would like to help.

Before I finish, I would like you to take a minute to remember that we as Toronto taxpayers, are in this crisis together. Whether homeowner, tenant, or businessperson, CVA is an attack on all of us. We must stop wasting time arguing over who is getting the worst

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hit, who should be paying more, and who should making up the short fall. The more time we waste arguing amongst ourselves, the closer our day of reckoning will draw.

Let's show this government some real backbone, let's show them some unity, and let's show Mike Harris that the power to change things still lies with the people. And if he still doesn't hear...we'll make him listen!!