



January 2, 2004

The Honorable Jeb Bush
Governor of the State of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida, USA 32399-0001

SUBJECT: Homestead Allowance and Save-Our-Home amendment and
Property Tax Rates for Non-Permanent Residents

Dear Governor Bush:

It was a pleasure to work with you in opposition to the draft INS visitor regulations that would have seriously limited the time Canadians could have visited your state. Thank you for coming to Toronto after our SARS epidemic last year and providing an opportunity for me, as Canadian Snowbird Association president, to meet with you.

I am writing to you at this time concerning a matter that could also prove harmful to the long-term attractiveness of Florida as a winter home destination for Canadians.

Within the last few months the Canadian Snowbird Association has received numerous letters from winter Floridian members concerning the impact of Florida's Homestead Allowance and the Save-Our-Home constitutional amendment. In essence, many members are indicating that the disproportionate shifting of the property tax burden onto the shoulders of winter Floridians, through the provisions of these two pieces of legislation, are causing them to seriously consider selling their homes in Florida and relocate their winter residences out of state. As a recent CSA member survey showed that 57% of respondents identified Florida as the location of their winter residence, you would no doubt agree with me that there could be a significant widespread economic fall out across the state from this situation.

To cite just a couple of examples of how the Homestead Allowance and the Save-Our-Homes amendment is affecting winter Floridians this year:

Member "A" – Fort Myers – 1200 sq ft condominium – neighbour's taxes \$2,300
– their taxes \$6,500 for same size unit.

Member "B" – Sarasota – condominium – 1999 taxes \$2,674.81 – 2003 taxes
\$6,429.08 (141.6% increase in 5 years)

Member "C" – Sarasota – condominium – 1999 taxes \$3,892.89 – 2003 taxes
\$9,399.40 (141.4% increase in 5 years).

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We must respectfully submit that winter Floridians are in fact only utilizing those services that are paid for through the property tax rates on a "part-time" basis for a few winter months compared to other residents who are deriving a full year-round benefit at a substantially lesser property tax cost. With such a disproportionate shift of the total costs being shouldered by a smaller seasonal group, Florida is quickly becoming both less desirable as well as less affordable as a winter destination. As more and more people are retiring before the traditional age of sixty-five, and as part of their increased leisure years considering establishing a second winter home outside Canada, Florida may not be a first choice under these conditions.

While we are not suggesting that you should repeal either the current Homestead Allowance or the Save-Our-Home amendment, recognizing that many winter Floridians choose modest condominiums, mobile homes, etc. while, at the same time contributing millions to the local economies of the state, would it not be possible to create a similar parallel \$25,000 exemption for those other individuals, and keep Florida as both an attractive and affordable choice for a winter home?

This is a serious concern of many of our members, and they have asked the Canadian Snowbird Association to make you aware of the situation.

I shall be stepping down as president this month and Gerald Brissenden will be the incoming president. He resides in Bradenton for several months each winter.

We will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen K. White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen K. White
President