

Putin Talks Taxes With Tomsk Students

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Putin told students in Tomsk on Wednesday that he would rather see people enjoying football than drinking vodka. **Alexsey Druginyn**

Tax breaks cannot be provided universally without damaging the federal budget, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Wednesday.

"If we make exceptions for every important case, that would ruin the tax system," Putin told a meeting of students in Tomsk, in response to a question about income tax on stipends. "The problem isn't making exceptions in the tax system but providing it with more money."

He also said he considers Russians making 30,000 rubles (\$978) a month or more to be "middle class."

The prime minister said public criticism of him was a sign that civil society is developing.

"You know how they rip me on the Internet," Putin told the students. "The main thing is that our cultural code isn't broken and bad language isn't used. The fact that a discussion is taking

place, that society is forming — that's very good."

He also told the students that it was possible that Rosneft and Gazprom Neft could become sponsors of their local football club, called Tom, as long as the structure of the sponsorship is transparent.

"[The companies] are ready to come to the event tomorrow to work with leaders of the region and the club, to start the process," said Putin, adding that he had already discussed the possibility with them.

"I personally want the team to continue to exist and people to get joy [from them] and come to the stadium, instead of drinking vodka," the prime minister said.

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