

Burpee-Mills to appeal Misery Bay Park assessment decrease

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EVANSVILLE—Burpee-Mills Township will be appealing its property value assessment (through the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation) for the Misery Bay Provincial Park, which has been decreased and will likely mean payment in lieu of taxes the township had been receiving through the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) will be reduced.

“It appears this is part of a new parks strategy developed by the MNR, and it looks as if the MNR has made a deal with MPAC which have decreased the assessed value of the Misery Bay Park land,” stated Ken Noland, reeve of Burpee-Mills Township. “The assessment on the park has gone down about one-third and we get a grant in lieu of taxes being paid on the property, so we expect there will be a reduction in the amount of funds we receive.” He said he had pointed out in a conversation with MPAC that overall assessments in Ontario had increased, but not in the case of Misery Bay.

“Yes, the assessment went down about one-third on Misery Bay Park,” said Mr. Noland.

“We will be appealing this, especially since so many other park assessments went up. It’s crazy, and it will affect municipalities like ours. In Killarney, the park there has seen a decrease in assessment value of \$17 million.”

“What gets me about all of this is that it is just one more slap in the face for rural Northern Ontario municipalities,” stated Mr. Noland. “We have already lost out on the farm tax rebate program and forest managed-land tax programs, conservation lands are not taxed, and First Nations are going to be allowed to purchase land in municipalities without having to pay taxes on them and everyone who lives in the municipality has to pay more. And now this.”

“With Misery Bay Park, how much has the government put into the interpretive centre and work on the park? They must have put in \$1 million and there are 2,500 acres of property within the park,” explained Mr. Noland. “If anything the assessment should be increasing, especially when you consider they have miles of shoreline property at Misery Bay.”

“We have the right to appeal the assessment, and we certainly will be,” said Mr. Noland.

“Our (District Services Board) costs have gone up, the health unit budget is increasing and policing costs are increasing for municipalities, and again, now this increased cost to taxpayers,” said Mr. Noland.

Pierre Fortin of MPAC told the Recorder, “the MNR over the last two years filed a number of appeals on many properties including parks. A revised methodology is now in place, with the appeals by the MNR on parks,” he said, noting overall in Ontario there has been an increase in assessments for parks, although this isn’t the case with Misery Bay.

“The municipality (Burpee-Mills) will continue to receive an amount in lieu of taxes on the park property (through the MNR), but the grant amount may change,” continued Mr. Fortin.

Mr. Fortin explained, “as everyone knows the province currently is dealing with a large financial deficit and all ministries have been told to tighten their belts.”

In a conference call late last week with MPAC, “he did confirm the overall value of parkland in Ontario has increased, but there have been decreases in some properties, and this is part of the reason for the changes that have been made here,” said Mr. Noland. “The main thing is once again provincial policies have hurt rural Ontario municipalities.”

[Tom Sasvari](#)

