

# Espanola caught between a rock and a hard place

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The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board finance committee met on April 24, a day prior to the monthly board meeting. They reviewed Espanola's apportionment letter from the March meeting.

The letter expressed the changes in the amount based of Domtar's assessment due to the Assessment Review Boards decision would entitle a lower payment in Espanola's apportionment to DSB.

The committee sympathized with the issues raised by Espanola and recognized this could happen to any municipality within the DSB jurisdiction. They did not believe there was anything the DSB can do to assist Espanola, without adversely affecting the other municipalities that form the DSB board.

They stated this issue has occurred because of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) improperly assessing the property in question and/or failed to defend its assessment at the appeal.

The resolution the committee presented to the board noted municipalities are required to pay for the services provided by MPAC and MPAC is not being held accountable for their decision and municipalities are being adversely affected not only in current budget year, but retroactively based on appeal decisions.

At a quick glance and calculation of the figures, the Town of Espanola staff calculated these changes will cost the taxpayers and additional \$600,000 over the past years.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB resolution calls upon Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario to hold MPAC accountable for its decision. In addition, they are asking the ministers of Finance and Municipal Affairs and Housing to rectify this matter to ensure that Espanola or any other municipality is not adversely affected by MPAC decisions and appeals.

This resolution outraged Espanola Councillor Jack McMillan who stated that he will be speaking with his fellow councillors about seeking legal advice, and if it is deemed necessary, there will be legal action taken towards the DSB to recuperate the costs.