



CANADA – December 2021

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ONTARIO

MPAC says no property assessment in Almaguin, Parry Sound for at least two more years

Current property evaluations 'are just nuts,' says local taxation manager

The provincial government's decision to delay the property assessment updates scheduled to take place during the coming year is being met with mixed reactions across the district.

"This means that property taxes for the 2022 and 2023 taxation years will continue to be based on the Jan. 1, 2016 valuations," said Nicole McNeill, president and chief administrative officer of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

The decision is a bit of a double-edged sword for municipal councillors, who see the benefits for property owners along with the downsides for municipalities.

"This is the first time I've seen MPAC do anything like this," said Powassan councillor Dave Britton. "Property assessments will only go up this year if the owners have changed the property drastically like adding additional buildings or major renovations."

Coun. Debbie Piekarski said the decision was "a smart move on MPAC's part. To make a call on house values right now would be a mistake (in light of COVID prices) and those values would likely have to be backtracked in the future."

On the flip side, Town of Parry Sound revenue and taxation manager Rob Beaumont said, "I'm not happy. It's frustrating for municipalities because we can't fully assess our growth (without those figures)."

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On the other hand, he acknowledges current property evaluations based on purchasing prices “are just nuts, so a 2022 assessment is not likely to represent the true value of the property.”

Britton said he expects to see real estate values stabilize over the next two years, and that postponing the MPAC evaluations should mean “dramatic savings” for property owners.

Beaumont agrees. “Markets are erratic now. I’ve seen properties around Parry Sound sell for a million dollars over their assessed value and that’s not a true picture. If MPAC does its assessment in 2023, maybe the market will have gone down a bit, but it’s really just a guessing game.”

Normally, MPAC re-evaluates Ontario properties every four years and this assessment gives municipalities statistics to base growth and development on in addition to a guide for setting municipal taxes.

For many Northern Ontario communities that have experienced significant growth during the pandemic, not being able to quantify those figures “is disappointing,” said Powassan Mayor Peter McIsaac, “but under the current market conditions I have no idea how you would get a realistic evaluation.”

While municipalities are accepting of the assessment not taking place next year, they are less accepting of MPAC’s indecision on when the next review will take place.

“Most municipalities just want to know when the new figures will be available,” said Beaumont. “For the next two years we’re set with no change, so we’re all guessing it may be 2024.”

The 2016 property assessment will continue to be the basis on which municipalities will set their mill rates to produce a balanced budget for, at least, the next two years.

MPAC recognized as a Top Employer for third year in a row

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is pleased to announce that for the third year in a row, it has been recognized as one of Greater Toronto's Top Employers for 2022.

"This award has become the benchmark for a company's best practices, and we are honoured to once again be named among Greater Toronto's Top Employers," said Nicole McNeill, President and Chief Administrative Officer.

MPAC was recognized based on several criteria including: work culture and atmosphere; health and wellness; financial and family benefits; vacation and time off; employee engagement and communications; performance management; training and skills development; and community involvement.

Highlights included MPAC's strong focus on employee mental health, regular communication with employees and live updates from leadership, vacation allowances and support for flexible work.

"As the course of the pandemic has evolved, MPAC has remained flexible, agile and adaptable to ensure we could continue to deliver the important work that municipalities and other stakeholders depend on."

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said Nicole. "This award is a testament to our commitment to balance employee health and wellness while ensuring we are delivering value to our stakeholders."

With offices across Ontario, MPAC employees work not only in property valuation and inspection roles but also in customer relations, legal, information technology, commercial sales, human resources, communications and finance.

MPAC is featured along with other winners of the 2021 competition in a special magazine published in The Globe and Mail and online at CanadasTop100.com.

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