

Manitoulin-Espanola DSB part of ambulance services funding freeze

By
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ESPANOLA – The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB) has been given the news by the province that funding for ambulance services across the province will be frozen again this year.

“Basically, the province has announced that funding is being frozen by the province at 2018 funding levels. The problem is that this was based on the 2017 budget, so the funding freeze has now been in place for two years,” said Fern Dominelli, CAO of the DSB on Monday. “So we are 27 months behind in funding.”

“We have not received funding letters from the province concerning First Nations and TWOMO funding. We don’t know exactly what is going to happen without details,” said Mr. Dominelli.

Danny Whalen, president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), told the Recorder on Saturday, confirmed after the FONOM annual conference last week that “the province is telling us the EMS funding is frozen at 2018 levels. And since the levels are from the 2017 budget, they are now two years with funds being frozen.”

An Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) release May 7 titled ‘Another Budget Shoe Drops Today’ reads, “municipal governments are receiving another provincial budget impact today. The cost shared ambulance grants are now frozen at 2018 levels. Due to the yearly funding lag, it should be noted these 2018 levels are actually based on the province’s 2017 funding allocation. Any growth in service costs contained in municipal 2019 budgets will fall to municipal taxpayers.”

“AMO is doing cumulative impact analysis as fiscal information becomes available for all affected service areas such as public health and child care. The impacts will be weighed against the budget’s comment that changes and costs

need to be sustainable for both orders of government,” the release continues. “Municipal governments already contribute at least \$2.1 billion to health services, from mandated cost-shared ambulance and public health to filling gaps such as on mental health, physician recruitment and the opioid crisis on the ground.”

“As well, in today’s funding letter the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care stated that, as the ministry advances its plan to modernize emergency health services in Ontario, we will work directly alongside municipal partners to engage in meaningful discussions about protecting and enhancing emergency support services across Ontario’,” the AMO release continues. “The Ontario budget stated that the province is “being a true provincial partner that listens to the needs of communities while ensuring financial sustainability for both the province and municipalities.”

“I don’t think it will impact staffing levels,” said Mr. Dominelli. “There will be (additional) costs to municipalities, but how much don’t know yet,” he said, pointing out the DSB budget has already been set for this year. “And when we get the full impact of what it is we will have six to seven months to manage it.