

WSIB claims, funding changes could cause half million deficit for DSB

By
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May 29, 2019

ESPANOLA – The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB) learned at its May meeting that it's looking at an estimated \$500,000 deficit for 2019.

When the estimated deficit was raised by one board member, the DSB's visiting auditors, who were there presenting the 2018 audited financial statements, noted that it should be of concern and said steps should be made to budget appropriately, as rising Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) payments over the last five years should mark a trend.

CAO Fern Dominelli explained that some of the shortfall comes from WSIB payments on behalf of paramedic services—something that is hard to budget for. The remainder, \$351,995, is due to provincial funding changes.

"We've taken steps in this year's budget," Mr. Dominelli said, noting that an additional \$113,000 has been budgeted for WSIB payments for 2019.

"Having an unbudgeted \$500,000 deficit can be of big harm and wipe out this organization's reserves," the CAO added. "Right now it's \$500,000, next year it could be \$1 million—we just don't know."

Mr. Dominelli told the board that the DSB has taken major steps toward preventative measures to help ensure their paramedics are safe and healthy, such as outfitting all the ambulances with special stretchers that save back stress as well as Road to Mental Readiness training to help tackle Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health-related issues. Potential employees also undergo psychological analysis upon hiring to make sure they are a good fit for the stress of the job.

Mr. Dominelli told the board that paramedics are nearing police officers in terms of WSIB claims.

When contacted by this newspaper to ask why the DSB doesn't budget more than the aforementioned \$113,000, Mr. Dominelli replied, "Because that's all we can afford."

"It's something you hope will disappear, but year after year trends show that's not likely to happen," he added.