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PHOTO BY PETE FISHER

Members of the Canadian Advocates for Tax Awareness protest Municipal Property Assessment Corporation property valuations outside Monday's Cobourg council meeting.

## Province won't change assessment scheme any time soon: MPP

By Valerie MacDonald  
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*Under the current property assessment system real estate sales and like properties determine the 'actual value' of the property resulting in ongoing assessment increases.*

*The goal of public rallies taking place in Northumberland is to stabilize assessments.*

Across North America "the majority" of jurisdictions use

some form of actual value assessment, Northumberland MPP Lou Rinaldi says in defence of the provincial assessment-setting rules the government has legislated for use by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

"Ontario is not unique," he said. At this time the Ontario provincial government is not looking at changing the system, Mr. Rinaldi added, although it has addressed

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## Ombudsman to probe MPAC practices

By Valerie MacDonald  
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"The taxpayers of Ontario deserve this," says the head of Canadian Advocates for Tax Awareness (CAFTA) of the Ontario's Ombudsman investigation into the way property assessment values are being set in this province.

"I'm ecstatic," CAFTA chair Paul Hazell of Trent Hills said Monday just minutes after Ombudsman Andre Marin announced he has directed the Special Ombudsman Response Team to investigate the way property assessments are being valued by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

Legal notices were served on MPAC officials on Monday morning.

"The public outcry on this issue is palpable," Mr. Marin said during a press conference in Ottawa. "There are profound concerns expressed concerning MPAC's operations which has caused me to invoke the mandate of the office."

A media release from Mr. Marin's office states that "the investigation will focus on two main themes:

- an alleged lack of transparency in the property assessment system; and
- the integrity and efficiency of the decision-making process."

Anyone with information and concerns about MPAC's property assessment system is being urged to call 1-866-623-SORT (7678) or

visit the website at [www.ombudsman.on.ca](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca) to fill out a SORT information form online.

Mr. Hazell says he has already called the investigation line.

"We filed a report over the phone last week," he said.

During that conversation an investigator said SORT was unaware that CAFTA's goal was to change the existing assessment system used by MPAC — a goal that has been endorsed by more than 60 municipalities.

The Ontario government has been provided with that same information, Mr. Hazell said.

"This (existing) system of assessment and taxation can't go on like this," he said. "How can the government watch people lose their homes with a system created by bureaucrats, when people don't have the ability to pay?"

During the Ombudsman's announcement in Ottawa, Mr. Marin said he was "troubled by allegations from homeowners that MPAC has refused to recognize past decisions by its own staff and the Assessment Review Board reducing assessments — and that property owners are continually forced to go back to the drawing board each year to appeal their assessments."

Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli has described the current assessment system as "a mess" and informed the Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty of his council's position.

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley

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