

Tree fees new leaf for city

Cost for removal set to grow

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The city is trying to root out an additional \$200,000 from fees imposed for dealing with trees.

A resident who wishes to remove healthy trees from their property to make way for a new addition, deck or other construction project would see the fee increase to \$300 from \$200 under a proposal before today's meeting of Toronto's parks committee.

The proposal also calls for Toronto residents to start paying \$300 when they file a request to remove a healthy city-owned tree from their property.

"They're so desperate here," said Councillor Michael Walker, a parks committee member opposing increases. "There's no fiscal discipline or financial discipline at City Hall. If it moves, they're taxing it."

City officials recently unveiled a plan which, if approved, will hike fees for recreational programs by 66% over seven years and provide more free classes for the poor. Skating, swimming and leadership programs will also be introduced into schools under the plan.

Toronto residents will pay nearly

9.4% more for water this year; a municipal land-transfer tax kicks in Feb. 1; a \$60-a-year vehicle registration levy starts in the fall; and new garbage charges will be introduced later in 2008.

In addition, Toronto residents can expect a property tax increase when city council finalizes its 2008 budget in the coming weeks.

"It's just making this place not a liveable city any more," Walker said. "Everywhere you look, you've got the City of Toronto out with their hand out asking for more money. Then you wonder what your \$4,000 or \$5,000 in (property) taxes are paying for."

A private tree bylaw prohibits people from cutting down or injuring trees that have a trunk with a diameter of 30 cm or greater — measured 1.4 metres from the ground — without a permit. If the city determines a tree is dead, a hazard or fatally diseased, no permit is required.

Richard Ubbens, director of urban forestry, said the increases for tree services are designed to ensure those making applications pay the full cost of the work.

The proposal also calls for the introduction of a \$50 fee for a site inspection.



WALKER
"Desperate"