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# Town slaps provincial government with \$114,000 reimbursement bill

Halton Hills will send an invoice for \$114,000 to the provincial government—the amount that has cost the town's treasury department to send out tax bills this year.

"The province should reimburse the town for the costs that were forced upon it, and be accountable for the tremendous amount of strain placed on staff," wrote Treasurer Ed DeSousa in a report to council, approved without comment at Monday night's meeting.

An itemized bill will include: \$85,000 for lost revenue; \$7,000 for computer programming; \$2,000 for printing setup and \$20,000 for staffing.

The Town of Halton Hills is not going alone on this reimbursement request; Halton Region will be sending a bill for \$181,000 too. The region's costs included \$31,000 in staff time and \$150,000 in increased interest carrying costs as a result of the provincial government delays.

The town's finance department was hit with a double barrel of demands by the provincial government this year. First, there was property reassessment requiring the new tax policies—which were delayed until the provincial government passed legislation on final education tax rates, along with capping provision for commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties. That delay cost the town \$85,000 in lost revenue because it was forced to postpone the sending out the June tax bills until July, but still pay the school boards their share on the taxes on time.

*'The province should reimburse the town for the costs that were forced upon it, and be accountable for the tremendous amount of strain placed on staff.'*



—town treasurer Ed DeSousa

Last month, the provincial government denied a council request to delay tax payments to the school boards that would allow the town to recoup the \$85,000 in lost revenue.

Second, the provincial government also ordered a new standardized tax bill. This forced changes to the town's property tax software plus additional costs in printing and staff overtime. Municipalities had lobbied the provincial government to postpone the introduction of the standardized bill until next year due to this being a reassessment year, but that was denied.

A Halton Region report also cited errors and anomalies in data provided by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation which also resulted in increased staff costs.

Together, Halton Region and its four municipalities had to fork out more than \$700,000 this year due to the provincial government's delays and decisions on the 2001 tax bill.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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