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Speaker: **Andrew Debnam**

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RSVP immediately as seating is limited. Seminars will take place on:

- Monday, January 22, 2001 7:30 pm
- Wednesday, January 24, 2001 7:30 pm
- Thursday, January 25, 2001 7:30 pm
- Saturday, January 27, 2001 10:30 pm
- Monday, January 29, 2001 7:30 pm
- Tuesday, January 30, 2001 7:30 pm

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'Don't panic,' farm federation says

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value, the higher assessments will likely translate into tax hikes. "With a 66 per cent increase in King, it's certainly not going to be covered," said King treasurer Don Young.

But a spokesperson for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture suggests most farmers won't see significant hikes.

"I think it's early to push the panic button. We'll have higher taxes, but not substantial," said Dave Older, after attending a pre-Christmas meeting with officials of the Ontario Property Assessment Corporation. "Numbers across the province are around 23 per cent with some spots — closer to urban centres and with good soils and good farming — where they are substantially higher, maybe even double. We're somewhat concerned with some of the values."

Adding to the confusion is the method of calculating the increase in assessed values. Mario Vittiglio, OPAC's commissioner for York Region, stated farmland increases in York Region range from 20 to 45 per cent. "The municipalities are using different measurements. I'm just looking at assessment," said Vittiglio.

But OPAC's method includes farm residences, which have not increased as much as the actual farm land.

"Mario's talking about total farm assessment, which includes the residential portion of the farm, which usually amounts to one acre of the total property," said Al Evelyn. "The change has been somewhat marginalized with that method. At the end of the day, the farm taxpayer is still going to see a significant change."

Still, agricultural rep Dave

Older said farmers should ask themselves if the new assessment figures accurately reflect the value of their properties.

"The first test for the farmer is to ask could he get that price for his farm. In my own experience, most of them wouldn't sell for the new assessed value. I think farmers would be surprised at the detail the assessment office has and might reach some comfort from that." Older said farmers who don't agree have until March 31 to appeal assessments.

But Evelyn wonders how many farmers have fully grasped the size of the increases. "Where I have a concern — and I haven't had many farmers call and ask me about the high increase in the farm tax category — they're not going to notice the difference until July when the appeal deadline will have already passed. And I suspect they'll say they didn't know the implications."

Security systems need 10 digits to work

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begins tomorrow in the 416 exchange, followed by York Region in the spring.

Beginning April 7, anyone dialing seven digits in the 905 exchange will hear a recording reminding them 10-digit dialing will be mandatory June 9.

After June 9, new phone numbers in York Region will be assigned the new 298 area code.

While it may be a few months before the change is implemented, officials say the public should be prepared. According to Glen Lovsin, owner of Lockshop Security Systems in Newmarket, many home security systems

contact a security station in the event of an emergency so it is imperative they be updated.

His company has been programming home security systems for clients with 10-digit dialing for the past two years, when they were first made aware of the potential problem.

Lovsin said he is even calling clients with systems more than two years old to remind them and he can usually make the necessary changes remotely.

While residents and business owners may bemoan the impending switch, dialing three extra digits is expected to be far less disruptive than the situation seven years ago where some 416

phone numbers changed to 905.

There are several phone companies that issue phone numbers and every January these companies complete an industry survey forecasting usage. When it became evident the numbers were being gobbled up at astronomical rates, telecommunications officials had to get the message out to the public a massive change was coming.

The news had industry officials scrambling for a solution and it was decided overlaying a second area code would be the quickest and most practical solution. An overlay refers to the co-existence of an old and new area code in the same region.

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