



Chamber protects building owners from fee increases

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City Council sent a proposal to increase property assessment appeal fees back to administration for further consultation last week. The Calgary Chamber of Commerce argued the fee increases were too narrowly focused on the financial concerns of the City and did not consider the impact to the business community.

"The Chamber recognizes that access and deterrence are two issues of central importance to the debate over the new filing fees," said Geoff Pradella, Vice-President of Public & Government Affairs in a Sep. 13 letter to City Council. "The fees must be set at a level that guarantees the widest access possible while deterring frivolous assessment appeals."

Under the scheme, appeal fees were to rise from \$50 to as high as \$700. City Council also considered basing the appeal fees on a percentage of the previous year's tax assessment. For a Class A Office Tower assessed at \$600 million, appeal fees would be more than \$80,000, according to the Building Owners and Managers Association of Calgary.

"If the recommendations were adopted, business owners would effectively have no right of appeal as the fees would be prohibitive," said Pradella. "Small business would be affected, as any increase would likely be passed along in higher rental rates."

Nearly 50 per cent of filing appeal fees were rebated to successful complaints in 2007, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

The Chamber plans to participate in the consultation process.