

# Local residents voice their budget concerns at the public consultation

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A series of public consultations regarding the City of Ottawa's 2008 budget made its way to the Orléans area on November 20th.

East end councillors Bob Monette, Rainer Bloess, Rob Jellet and Michel Bellemare, along with city manager Kent Kirkpatrick, city treasurer Marian "Marianne" and Mayor Larry O'Brien, listened intently as local residents posed questions and raised concerns in relation to the city's direction at the Orléans Theatre at 255 Centrum Boulevard.

O'Brien, standing at the podium addressing the crowd, said during discussions and deliberations involving the city's budget, conflicts and arguments will arise.

However, the number of ideas would result in posi-

tive outcomes, and he is confident all involved will come together for the good of Ottawa.

"Cities are facing significant financial pressures," he said. "This is probably the single, most important time of the year, where we try to balance the scale of increasing taxes and the decrease of services. There will be arguments and conflicts, and out of conflict comes truth. Your council and city staff will make the right decisions."

The budget offers three possible scenarios when it comes to balancing a tax increase with service reductions.

The Ottawa Police called for a 1.4 increase to balance its budget, a 3.4 rise would require new revenues or services to be cut by \$25 million, a zero percent hike would see a combined \$34 million in user fees and service reductions.

For a tax freeze, sev-

eral facilities and services would be cut or closed for good across the city, including several in the east end.

Among them are the Blackburn Hamlet branch of the Ottawa Public Library, which is one of 10 libraries across the city on the chopping block; the Fallingbrook and Queenswood Heights Community centres; the elimination of outdoor rink grants to other community associations and recreation groups; and reducing curb side garbage pick up, which happens every two weeks.

It was unanimously agreed that a zero percent wasn't worth the risk of losing important services.

"I would rather give up zero if it meant keeping our library and other services," said Laura Czejac, a resident of Blackburn Hamlet.

Susan Flemming, a Cumberland resident, said it was frustrating to have

to go through the same situation that took place in 2004.

"I feel manipulated again," she said angrily. "I can't tell you how annoyed I am to be back here."

Innes councillor Rainer Bloess and Beacon-Hill Cyrville councillor Michele Bellemare said they expect a 3.4 per cent in tax increases, while Cumberland councillor Rob Jellet and Orléans councillor Bob Monette said they hope to come close to zero as possible.

"I wasn't elected to cut services," said councillor Bloess, who's ward includes the Blackburn Hamlet branch.

Jellet and Monette both said they weren't surprised with what residents had to say.

"The message was loud and clear," said Coun. Jellet. "There are services that we need to maintain, and if that means a tax increase, so be it."



Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien addresses the crowd at a budget consultation at the Orléans Theatre early last week.

## Orléans e-Learning Centre open house showcases the new services

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residents in the area,

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edge centre will give our

better and quicker access

high speed Internet access,