Omnibus splits council

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"Betrayal" and "abused" are a couple of words councillors used to describe how they felt about this year's budget process.

City council wrapped up the 2009 budget debate yesterday with another omnibus motion that avoided any debate about the capital budget. Two days ago a group of councillors did the same thing with the operating budget, which will result in a 4.9% property tax increase.

Mayor Larry O'Brien said the councillors who supported the omnibus motions were afraid to debate the budget line-by-line.

"What I saw this afternoon is disgusting," said O'Brien following the final budget vote. "They acted out of fear, not leadership. We didn't have the appropriate debate. It's a travesty for our citizens."

Stittsville-Kanata West Coun. Shad Qadri said councillors abdicated their responsibility as elected officials because the omnibus motions nixed any debate.

"I feel betrayed today," he said.

Orleans Coun. Bob Monette said this year's budget was a disgrace, and some of his colleagues can't manage to put in a full day's work for their almost $100,000 salary.

"I want to apologize to the residents of Ottawa for what they have seen here," said Monette. "I hope you are proud of the budget because I'm not."

The councillors who voted for the property tax increase said they have been preparing for the budget talks for months and were offended by some of their colleagues' remarks.

Rideau-Vanier Coun. Georges Bedard said the only people who should feel used and abused are the community groups that once again had their budgets threatened by council.

"These are the people who should feel betrayed," he said. "It's a slap in their face."

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