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Budget committee approves fee hikes for water, garbage

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Twenty-five minutes: That's all it took for Toronto's budget committee to endorse water and garbage budgets worth a total of about \$1.5 billion for 2010.

Only one councillor from outside the budget committee — Karen Stintz (Ward 16, Eglinton-Lawrence)- turned up for Friday's session, at which the committee recommended approval of the budgets that include higher fees for residents.

Water rates would rise by 9 per cent, costing a typical household an extra \$51 a year if city council approves the proposed budget. Garbage fees would also rise: Households with medium bins would pay \$44 a year instead of \$39; large bin holders would pay \$140 instead of \$131 and extra large bin holders would pay \$198 instead of \$190. Small bin holders will get a refund of \$6, down from \$10.

Councillor Paul Ainslie (Ward 43, Scarborough East) voted against the garbage budget. He said the fees are improperly structured. Households with extra garbage can buy a tag, put the trash in a bag and have it collected, he said. But households with extra recycling are not allowed to put it out for collection if it doesn't fit in their blue bin.

That discourages recycling when the city is trying to divert as much waste as possible from the dump, he said.