

Aldermen reject idea of new taxes, levies

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Ald.

Diane Colley-Urquhart said it's not the time to be 'floating trial balloons.' (CBC)

The City of Calgary won't be adopting new taxes anytime soon, members of a committee examining a report on new revenue streams said Thursday.

"It's probably not the time at all to be musing and floating trial balloons when it comes to more taxation," said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart. "Adding more tax in an economic downturn or in a technical recession is absolutely the wrong thing to do."

City council commissioned the report, which looks at how other cities raise cash without increasing property taxes.

Among the suggestions was a land transfer tax, a local income tax, a general sales tax piggybacked on the GST, an accommodation tax, an amusement tax and a personal vehicle ownership levy of \$30. All the options required legislative changes from either the provincial or federal governments.

Members of the intergovernmental affairs committee said Thursday that their first choice would be getting a bigger share of the property tax that is currently split between the city and the provincial government.

But Ald. Brian Pincott said they have to keep their options open.

"We're going to continue to exploring the routes that ... are available to us, at the same time as we keep pressing our point with the province," he said.

Aldermen in Calgary recently had a long and difficult debate over property tax increases. As a result, Calgary property owners will see a tax hike of 5.3 per cent in 2009, 6.1 per cent in 2010 and 6.7 per cent in 2011.