



## Kingston takes on tax man role

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Kings County Register

At their January 13 meeting, members of the Kingston village commission unanimously approved a motion for the village to adopt an in-house tax billing system.

Under the Municipal Government Act, villages have the same power to collect taxes as a municipality. Like many other villages, however, Kingston has long delegated this responsibility to Kings County. Whereas in the past collecting taxes would have been a major undertaking for the village, technology has created the capacity for Kingston's own economically feasible and manageable system.

In his report to the commission, clerk treasurer Greg Towne noted the county charged Kingston approximately \$35,600 in the 2009/ 2010 fiscal year to collect taxes on the village's behalf. By moving the village to its own collection system, Towne says the village will spend about \$12,500 per year for paper, printing, postage and advertising costs and additional bank charges. The net savings during the first year after the change-over would be just over \$24,000. After investing in initial set up costs, savings could be greater in subsequent years.

Towne said the accounting system currently used by the village does have capacity to handle the import of the considerable amount of data required to process property, sewer and sidewalk tax bills. The system will be monitored regularly and upgraded when necessary, probably within two years.

The county has been informed of Kingston's plan to collect its own taxes and village staff are working with county staff to ensure a smooth transition.

Kingston has also been working with its bank to offer ratepayers a variety of payment options, including on-line, telephone and in-branch payments. The village will also offer a pre-authorized payment plan option that allows equal monthly payments throughout the year. A debit machine will be installed in the village office to facilitate transactions for taxes and other village services.

Towne's plan to have the system up and running by the next tax billing cycle in May of this year was supported by all commissioners. Commission chairman Tom Beardsley said the change will allow the village to realize savings, while making the payment process easier for ratepayers.

"We have the technology and the expertise to do this - it just makes sense."