



# STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

## ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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### **OFFICES OF COMPTROLLER AND COUNTY EXECUTIVE WORK COLLABORATIVELY SENDING TAX BILL REFUNDS**

*A property tax bill error resulted in Administration overcharging thousands of taxpayers;  
joint effort to address mistake leads to refund checks being issued*

**(ERIE COUNTY, NY)** – Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw, Jr. announced today the Comptroller's office has begun issuing tax refund checks to taxpayers who were overcharged by the Poloncarz Administration on their 2020 property tax bills. The refunds are a result of a tax error when the Division of Real Property used an incorrect figure with Community Colleges for chargebacks to municipalities. Those chargebacks are costs to municipalities for their students attending community colleges outside of Erie County.

On the first day of printing a total of 3,530 rebate checks were mailed to taxpayers. It is estimated that it could take as much as two months to issue all the refund checks due taxpayers.

"The Office of Real Property Tax made a mistake. They incorrectly calculated community college chargebacks. It caused the wrong amount of property tax charged to some homeowners. That being said, the mistake was identified quickly. Collaboratively we corrected it. The Offices of Erie County Comptroller and Erie County Executive worked together to fix it. Now our offices are providing the refund thousands of property owners in Erie County deserve," said Comptroller Mychajliw.

Many Erie County taxpayers were overcharged a total of \$4.4 million. The affected communities include: the cities of Buffalo, Lackawanna and Tonawanda, as well as the towns of Alden, Amherst, Aurora, Cheektowaga, Clarence, Elma, Evans, Grand Island, Hamburg, Tonawanda, Lancaster, Orchard Park and West Seneca.

"We have been working very hard with the Poloncarz administration making sure taxpayers are made whole. People that receive refunds are strongly encouraged to cash the check as soon as possible. The refund more than likely isn't going to be a lot of money. Most refunds are less than twenty dollars. Since we have to reconcile accounts to the penny, it could be a pretty big headache if checks aren't cashed," said Comptroller Mychajliw.

Erie County ordered 200,000 checks at a cost of \$32.19 per one-thousand checks. To send 190,000 checks to those impacted, it amounts to \$6,116.

Envelopes come with a cost of \$31.49 per one-thousand. That equals \$5,983 for the 190,000 checks.

In addition, there is a cost associated with printing the checks. Those cartridges are \$270 apiece. An estimated 32 toner cartridges will be used, at a total cost of \$8,640.

The price-tag for issuing ordering the checks is approximately \$20,739.

On top of that, the cost of sending the checks via first class postage, at Erie County's bulk rate, is .50 per mailing. 190,000 checks to mail at a cost of .50 each is a cost of \$95,000.

In addition to the County of Erie sending the refund checks themselves, the Office of Real Property Tax is sending taxpayers a follow up letter with an updated, corrected property tax bill.

The cost for those envelopes is the same as the ones used to mail the refund checks: \$5,983 for the 190,000 corrected property tax bills.

Then the county is paying postage again for 190,000 letters to go out at a cost of approximately \$83,600.

This brings the entire total cost of mailing the refund checks and follow-up corrected tax bill: \$205,322.

Not included in the "hard costs" of printing the refunds and bills are the "soft costs" involved, including the number of Erie County employees that worked many months on this process.

"There is a cost involved in correcting the property tax miscalculation. Regardless, the government has an obligation to return the money owed to property taxpayers," concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

For those whose tax bill errors amounted to \$5 or less, the difference will be made up with a credit in next year's property tax bill.

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