

Councillors pay the way

Two give salary hikes back to city

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Councillor Peter Milczyn is donating his \$2,348 pay increase to the city after council last week refused to debate the issue. (JACK BOLAND/Sun Media)

Toronto taxpayers get your thank-you cards ready. You're getting a donation from Peter Milczyn.

The Etobicoke-Lakeshore councillor's donation of his \$2,348 salary increase comes after city council failed to debate a motion freezing its salaries in the wake of the economic downturn.

"Toronto taxpayers are being asked to pay increased property taxes, new taxes and new garbage collection fees this year, all while experiencing declining employment rates, job losses and salary freezes in the private sector," Milczyn said. "You can't be a little bit pregnant so either you're in favour of doing it and you're going to do it, or you're just talking about it."

He admits turning down the increase is symbolic but says it's important as the city negotiates with CUPE and as he fights to stop the bonus system for senior city staff.

FREEZE SALARY

Since Jan. 1, councillors have been earning \$99,153.60 -- up from last year's \$96,805.02 due to an automatic 2.42% cost-of-living salary adjustment.

A motion to city council last week to freeze councillors' salaries failed to garner enough support to avoid being sent to executive committee in April.

After the vote, Milczyn and Coun. Michael Walker both signed forms to donate their cost of living adjustment back to the city, effectively freezing their salaries.

Mayor David Miller said in December he'd freeze his \$163,040 salary and his office budget this year.

But Coun. Karen Stintz, who supports the freeze, said individual councillors or the mayor opting out of the increase doesn't help. "We let the mayor off the hook in taking a leadership role," Stintz said. "We need to set a direction of restraint."

The Ward 16 councillor said if the whole organization took a pay freeze, just for this year, taxpayers could save \$150 million.

Richard Powers, assistant dean and executive director, MBA Programs at U of T's Rotman School of Management, said freezing a cost of living increase is a moot point.

"It's hard to reward yourself a pay increase when people are losing their jobs. However, in city hall's example, which is heavily unionized, all the workers got their increases," Powers said. "I have yet to see a union accept a rollback or a freeze, so why shouldn't their bosses get (an increase)?"

Councillors in favour of accepting the increase pointed to their council cousins who rake in comparable or larger salaries for steering smaller municipal governments.

In 2008, Mississauga councillors earned a base salary of \$79,237, plus an additional \$47,083 for sitting on Peel Region council. Mayor Hazel McCallion and councillors received a 3% cost of living increase last April.

In Vaughan, councillors approved an annual wage of \$68,071 in 2007, \$70,113 in 2008 and \$72,216 starting Jan. 1. The same bylaw ensures embattled Mayor Linda Jackson's pay jumped around \$3,000 this year to \$115,763.

WHAT THEY'RE MAKING

TORONTO

Increase: 2.42% in 2009

- Councillors: Base salary \$99,153.60

- Mayor: Base salary \$163,040

(Note - Mayor David Miller turned down increase to \$166,985 this year)

MISSISSAUGA

Increase: 3% in 2008 (2009 figures TBA)

- Councillors: Base salary \$79,237; Car allowance \$17,300; Peel Region council: \$47,083.

- Mayor: Base salary \$132,661; Peel Region council \$47,083. Total: \$179,744.

VAUGHAN

Increase: 3% in 2009

- Councillors: Base salary \$72,216. Total \$72,216 plus committee remuneration

- Regional Councillors: Base salary \$72,216; York Region council \$46,105. Total \$118,321 plus committee remuneration

- Mayor: Base salary \$115,763; York Region council \$46,105. Total \$161,868 plus committee remuneration

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