

City spending \$250k to study weather  
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**By Jackson Proskow, Global News**

Some city councillors are questioning the city's decision to spend \$250,000 studying Toronto's weather and the effects of climate change.

"I'm speechless," said Councillor David Shiner (Willowdale), who didn't know about the study until Global News told him about it.

"This is a quarter million dollars ... to study the blowing of the wind, and what's really happening is that taxpayers' money is being blown out of this building."

Mr. Shiner and other fiscally conservative councillors see the study as an example of the kind of spending that should be cut as the city suffers through an economic downturn. This week, Mayor David Miller unveiled a proposed 2009 operating budget that hikes spending to \$8.7-billion from \$8.2-billion, and uses the last of the city's welfare contingency fund, just as payments are expected to skyrocket.

"Who is allowing these expenditures to go forward that are definitely not needed?" asked Mr. Shiner.

The city's call for proposals says it wants answers to several questions, including:

- "What is Toronto's current weather and climate? And why?"
- "How are Toronto's current weather and climate drivers expected to change? And why?"
- "What will be Toronto's future climate and weather? And why?"

Lawson Oates of the Toronto Environment Office said the study will allow the city to plan for extreme weather events.

"This is an investment that we're making in our community, our infrastructure and our building stock and it's

very necessary,” he said.

“So we can begin to look into the future so we know what to expect in terms of impacts.”

But critics of the administration say much of the information is already gathered by Environment Canada, and the rest could be done in-house.

“We have the staff in here making six figures and they should be able to do this work,” said Councillor Michael Walker (St. Pauls), who added: “Climate doesn’t change when you cross over the border from Toronto to Mississauga. It’s the same.”

The call for proposals said the study should focus on “intense events with limited geography and short time frames ... such as may cause highway wash-outs, flash flooding or tree and building blow-downs rather than intense events that are city or southern Ontario wide, such as heat waves.”

It says the study will help the city’s “adaptation strategies to climate change in Toronto.”