



DOOR CRASHER DAYS



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No shortage of money for some things

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Did you know Toronto closed down a couple of hundred subsidized housing units because they were in a horrible state of disrepair, and the city said it didn't have the money to fix them up?

This at a time when nearly 70,000 households are on the waiting list for a subsidized housing unit.

Only, now we know that money wasn't the problem. It couldn't have been. Not when the mayor can have staff reorganize itself to free up \$400,000 to pay for a self-promoting newsletter taxpayers don't need and didn't ask for.

How many of those boarded-up homes could have been repaired for \$400,000?

Of course, \$400,000 is the equivalent of pennies in a city that deals with billions. No one is suggesting that \$400,000 can make a dent in the housing repair backlog, pegged at \$300 million. Even the \$112 million earmarked for the problem this year doesn't eliminate the concern.

But 10 renovated homes, or 20, means 10 to 20 more families receiving proper housing in our city.

And using that money to write up warmed-over projects spun and massaged to tell citizens that their city is just humming along under the deft leadership of David Miller is a misuse of public funds and an abuse of public trust.

In case you missed it, Toronto announced recently it was publishing "Our Toronto," a quarterly newsletter it will send to each household. Apparently, it combines newsletters for water, waste and the TTC – a good move, one thinks, until one realizes the cost is doubled to \$800,000. And city councillors did not get a chance to vote on the matter.

So, whenever the city contemplates closing swimming pools and libraries and community centres and cites a lack of money, we know the mayor has other options.

"It doesn't square well with me at all," says Councillor Michael Thompson. "It's

frustrating. You have discussion with staff about a project in your ward and they tell you the city has no money. Then this."

Councillor Cesar Palacio has been trying to get flood control problems addressed around the west-end part of his ward along Harvie Ave.

Residents have had their insurance cancelled because of the recurring problems.

The city says it barely has money to do the environmental assessments needed to address the problem and Palacio has to wait until 2013. All for want of less than \$400,000.

"How can the taxpayer accept this when the mayor spends money on self-promotion?" says Councillor Frances Nunziata, another west-end councillor with basement flooding problems.

Across town, the O'Connor Community Centre in the Victoria Park-O'Connor Dr. area is in a high-needs part of the city.

It could use a splash pad to make summer more bearable for the kids. Not this year. Not next year. Maybe 2010, city bureaucrats say. Money's tight, you know.

Victoria Park Ave. itself is falling apart. The section from Lawrence Ave. to Ellesmere Rd. is marked by potholes, cracks and fissures.

"It's awful, and we've been trying to get it fixed for the last four years," says area Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong.

Road repair is somehow a lower budget priority than a newsletter promising political self-promotion.

From ward to ward you'll find a budget item left unfunded because the city says it doesn't have money. Only, now you know better.

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