

The recent round of budget debates at City Hall has had, and will continue to have, a very real and dramatic impact on the people of St. Paul's.

Over the past decade, Toronto has been in a perpetual budget crunch as a result of the downloading of Provincial programs onto the City. First and foremost, this is a problem we need to solve in a way that has the Province assume its proper responsibility for Provincial programs.

The Mayor has done little to make this an issue with the provincial government.

He did even less to make this an issue during the recent provincial election, even though Council urged him to do just that. Wouldn't you expect him to hound the Premier to the point of embarrassment on this issue if it is so important to our future? The Mayor has not taken the Province to task and we are all the worse for it.

What he has done is attempt to tax you, using new powers given to the City under the new City of Toronto Act: taxes on home-buying (a land transfer tax of up to 2% of the value of the sale) and taxes on vehicle registration. (\$60)

In my opinion, this is not simply a debate over the merits of higher taxes, but the form and the fairness of taxes as well.

In the past, property taxes and user fees, as well as Provincial grants, made up the City revenue required to provide City services. But a levy such as Mayor Miller's tax on the transfer of real estate is another thing altogether. This tax breaks with our tradition of universality that characterizes the homeowner property tax, in that it imposes a burden on one specific segment of the community.

At every public meeting held across the City to discuss these taxes, including St. Paul's wardwide meeting, and in correspondence with my office, residents have voiced their overwhelming opposition to these taxes.

We should focus on uploading the Provincial services, cutback on non-essential services, cutback on grants, investigate delivering our services other ways, and look at more equitable ways of increasing revenues for the City.

I will not be supporting these new tax proposals, for if we consent to these new taxes, we are simply opening the door to more of the same.