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Etobicoke Guardian

Council made right decision on new taxes

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Democracy proved it works Monday night at Toronto council as city politicians wisely voted to defer a decision on implementing a number of new taxes on local residents until after October's provincial election.

After a day of drama, and weeks of build up, council voted 23-22 for the deferral. It is the right decision for the right reasons, and **Ward 1 (Etobicoke North) Councillor Suzan Hall** should be given credit for bringing it to the table.

On Monday, councillors did their jobs and accurately reflected the concerns of local residents and businesses.

As the vote approached, and during Monday's council meeting, we almost felt sorry for Mayor David Miller and his supporters who so strongly wanted to shove new land transfer and vehicle registration taxes down the throats of residents. We say almost, however, because in the end this was a crisis of Miller's own making and he got everything he deserved by what is now only a deferral, though it certainly feels like a rejection.

The tax plan was poorly conceived and horribly executed, and the responsibility for that is Miller's.

Sadly, his response after the vote was more of the same. He warned, yet again, of massive cuts to city services and seemed entirely unable to grasp the wonderful opportunity council has now handed him.

Hall is correct when she says now is the time for council, the mayor and Toronto voters to start putting pressure on candidates in the provincial election. During a meeting with the Toronto Board of Trade, who opposed the tax hikes, Hall said provincial downloading was the real culprit in Toronto's financial crisis.

"So with the election coming up, I thought this was a good idea."

Why doesn't Miller see it that way? It's not as if he hasn't railed against the provincial downloading of social services onto the municipalities in the past. Making other levels of government pay their fair share was one of his favourite topics during last fall's city election.

These taxes were a bad idea on the mayor's part from the start. Add to that the arrogance he showed by refusing to attend any of the so-called public consultation meetings and we seriously have to question his leadership. If the \$356 million these taxes would have raised were as important as Miller claimed they were, he should have defended them personally to residents.

Thankfully, the majority of councillors have said the spotlight must now shift to the province.

Hopefully, Miller and city voters can now make provincial candidates understand the price of being elected will be to take responsibility for the financial mess Ontario's past two governments have tried to lay at the feet of Toronto.