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Etobicoke Guardian

Good ideas, but money comes first

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Two Etobicoke councillors have made a pair of reasonable suggestions that will go a long way to showing where the majority of city councillors put their priorities.

Given that council is made up of politicians, we shouldn't be surprised that so many of them spend the bulk of their time playing politics instead of looking out for the best interests of city residents.

But in the case of **Ward 1 (Etobicoke North) Councillor Suzan Hall's** call for a garbage amnesty and Ward 3 (Etobicoke Centre) Councillor Doug Holyday's suggestions that councillors' office budgets be cut, it's too bad that ideology so clearly seems to be coming before practicality in Toronto.

With the user fee garbage collection system slated to begin this year, Hall reasonably asked that residents be given a break twice a year for high-volume days. Those days would be at Christmas and when a family or individual moves house.

"This is something that's costing our citizens huge, and we should give them back something," Hall said of the user fee system and the need for amnesty days.

It seems a like a good idea to us, and one that would show the city has some flexibility and at least a vague understanding of the real world in which most city residents live.

Hall's proposal will be presented to the city's budget committee this Thursday, but given some of the early reaction it will probably face a rough ride.

All of which proves to us yet again that under the guise of meeting waste reduction targets, the true purpose of this new garbage system is to collect even more cash from residents.

After all, councillors obviously need every dime of taxpayers' money they can get their hands on. And the thought of turning that tap off for even one round of garbage collection does not meet with the philosophy that seems to guide most of council.

For example, Holyday is very reasonably calling for councillor's current office budgets of \$53,000 to be cut to \$25,000.

Now, that's still more than enough money for councillors to do what they really need to do, but it obviously isn't enough for them to rent high-profile office locations, and otherwise spend taxpayers' money promoting themselves between elections.

It will be interesting to see how much support Hall's and Holyday's proposals generate. We're not optimistic, however, that the idea of putting residents first will suddenly gain acceptance with this group of councillors.

Perhaps instead of a garbage amnesty, this city's residents might be best served by a councillor amnesty. During this period they would not be allowed to spend any of our money on themselves, but instead would each have to donate a portion of their salary or office budget to a community organization in need of financial help.