

Untimely pay hikes

March 02, 2008

Ever generous, at least to themselves, Toronto city councillors are pocketing an automatic 1.9 per cent increase, or \$1,800, in their \$95,000 salaries, which are linked to the inflation rate. That comes on top of a plush office expense budget, used for items as diverse as limo rides and bunny suits. And it is in addition to treats such as free parking at municipal lots and free golf.

In an effort to at least slow the municipal gravy train, Councillor Michael Walker has put forward a motion that would require councillors to surrender their \$1,800 windfall. With this sacrifice, Toronto politicians would send a powerful signal that the city's leadership is committed to restraint. That message would be especially useful in this year of intense labour negotiation.

Unfortunately, councillors are likely to reject Walker's motion in this week's session of council. Previous efforts to rein in the perks and privileges of Toronto's leaders have been similarly defeated. It is to the credit of Walker and a few others that they keep trying.

City councillors aren't alone in enjoying wage increases that come with clockwork regularity.

In April, MPs are to receive an automatic 3.1 per cent salary hike, which will put an additional \$4,600 into their pockets and bring their annual pay to \$155,400. And by law, Ontario's MPPs receive 75 per cent of whatever their federal counterparts collect, so they can expect a pay hike, too.

They should all be asking themselves whether such pay hikes are seemly in the current economic climate.