

**You could call it a brew ha ha at City Hall**

Apr 05, 2007 04:30 AM

**PAUL MOLONEY**

CITY HALL BUREAU

*Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti took exception to a proposal by Councillor Paul Ainslie to scrap free coffee service on the second floor of city hall, where councillors' offices are located. The move, which would have saved taxpayers \$20,000 annually, was rejected by the budget committee yesterday, but not before triggering a somewhat bitter debate.*

"I just think it's stupid, that's all. It's stupid," said Mammoliti, who isn't on the budget committee but showed up to grill Ainslie after he heard about Ainslie's motion.

**MAMMOLITI:** "I don't mean to belabour the whole cream, coffee kind of thing, but is it just councillors' reduction with respect to coffee and creams that's being suggested here, or is it everyone that works for the city?"

"You don't want us to have any coffee but everybody else that works for the city can have coffee.

"They don't pay for their own coffee? With all due respect, I can bring you into 20 different recreation centres that have coffee every day. I'm talking about the city, city-wide. How much do we spend on creams and coffees for other staffers in the city? Why is it politicians we're picking on?"

**AINSLIE:** "I'm not picking on politicians and I'm not picking on staff. I'm simply saying we should be leading by example. That's what I'm trying to achieve with this motion."

**MAMMOLITI:** "So where is it then that you're getting rid of the larger expense with respect to creams and coffees that are spent by the city? Where's that motion? Because I would imagine that the amount of money we spend on creams and coffees around the whole city would be a lot more than councillors spend on creams and coffees. So where's that in the motion? Where's that? Why just councillors? Because he wants us to be leaders. So why lead the charge in reducing the amount of money we spend for creams and coffees for councillors? What about the rest of the staff? What about the rest of the people that get it? Where's that here?"

**AINSLIE:** "It's not here. I'm looking to councillors to lead by example."

**MAMMOLITI:** "If you vote in favour of it, what does that do to the rest of the city?"

**AINSLIE:** "Nothing. It shows you're leading by example."

**MAMMOLITI:** "Okay. The money's still being spent. So I'd go have my cream and coffee in a community centre then. I'm still having cream and coffee. I'm just not paying for it out of my budget. It's just so dumb."

Following the questioning, Mammoliti took the opportunity to offer further comments to the committee:

“These are the choice words that I prefer today: stupid, idiotic, dumb. I just think that there are other people that seem to be around city council that seem to be trying to pull strings and drive the agenda.

"And some of us are not stupid, because we know what's going around behind the scenes. If you put enough emphasis and if you get people to pay attention to local councillors and politicians, then that takes all of the pressure off everybody else. So let's blame everything on the politicians and let's reduce their budgets and let's make sure that we single them out. And everybody in the city pays attention to the lowest budgets that are given in the city, and those are councillors.

"Lowest wages, with all due respect, are to the councillors, when you compare them to all of the other directors and everyone else in the city, okay? And so at budget time everybody wants to talk about councillors and what can we do to emphasize what councillors are doing and the abuse that's going on with respect to councillors' budgets -- when in reality, when you add up everything that we're nickel and diming ourselves to death, it adds up to millions if you talk about the whole city.

“So while I can respect Councillor Ainslie and some others that choose this argument at budget time, all the time, what you're in essence doing is picking on a group of people that don't have any power any more, that don't have any authority. They don't have anything any more because it's been taken away from us.

"And pretty soon, if you continue doing this at budget time, all we're going to be are rubber-stampers for staff. And that's not what I'm in politics for, damn it. I'm in politics to represent the community and sometimes that costs money.

“So take away my milks, take away my sugars, take away my creams. I really couldn't give a damn. But if you want a real impact in this city, take away the creams, the sugars and the coffees on the real expenses and that's the rest of the city.

“So leading by example doesn't mean politicians, because we're nobody any more in this city. Leading by example means directors, it means the heads of departments, it means all of these people (referring to civil servants in the room). So if you all want to lead by example, then those are the recommendations that staff should be putting forward with respect to cuts.

“You can try to take away my coffees and my creams. Go ahead. I'm still here. I'm still going to get re-elected.

“Pick and choose the members of council that will bring your agenda forward, guys. Keep doing that at budget time. Because when you do that, you forget about the real expenses of the city.

Maybe we should spend time figuring out and analyzing where the real expenses of the city are.  
And it's not in councillor's offices.

"Enough is enough."