

Toronto councillor says city doesn't have authority to implement cuts

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Toronto Mayor David Miller and his city manager are being accused of acting illegally in making service cuts in order to help fix the budget crisis.

The city decided to cut back on library and community centre hours, as well as reduce park maintenance and delay the opening of skating rinks in the winter. But Coun. Michael Walker has obtained a legal opinion that says those cuts cannot be made arbitrarily and must be voted on.

Walker has been upset by the cuts ever since city manager Shirley Hoy announced them in early August. Walker said city employees have no authority to make such moves and asked a law firm to offer an opinion on just how much power Hoy has.

The law firm concluded that the service cuts are, in effect, a change to this year's budget, which has already been approved, and that only council can make a budget change.

Walker concluded that the city manager and the mayor are acting illegally. He said Miller can't "make decisions on cuts without calling the council together."

Walker said he wants a special council meeting called for the end of the month to approve or reject the cuts that have already been announced.

Miller's office hasn't seen Walker's request or the legal opinion yet. But since the cuts were announced, Miller has said Hoy does have the power to do it because services are only being scaled back, not eliminated.

According to the mayor, "Shirley Hoy has the authority to manage and she's required to manage with the resources she has."

Miller said the city is not allowed to run a deficit and, if expenses don't match revenues, the city has to act to make sure they do.