

ST. PAUL'S, COUNCILLOR
Toronto City Hall, 2nd Floor, Suite B26
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

TEL: (416) 392-7906
Fax: (416) 392-0124
councillor_walker@toronto.ca
www.michaelwalker.ca

Media Release

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City Council Requested to Review City Manager's Independent Cost-Cutting Actions

Seconded by Councillor Stintz, I have placed a Notice of Motion calling for a Special Meeting of City Council in the first week of October to consider the actions taken by the City Manager to cut \$34 million in services from the approved 2007 City budget.

I have also tabled a written legal opinion from Gowlings dated September 4, 2007, which forcefully puts the case that the City Manager did not and does not have the legal authority to take such independent actions, and that City Council cannot delegate that authority to her.

As a result of the loss of potential revenue from the July, 2007 deferral of the Mayor's proposed Land Transfer Tax and Vehicle Registration Tax, the Mayor directed the City Manager to help offset this shortfall by finding savings within the Council-approved 2007 budget. The City Manager has identified and implemented \$34 million in new savings, primarily through cuts in services such as libraries, community centres, road maintenance, tree maintenance, and snow clearing.

These cuts were made by the City Manager without City Council approval. In correspondence to me dated August 20, 2007, the City Manager has stated her view that she has the legislative authority for such independent action. As noted above, an independent legal opinion argues forcefully that she does not.

I am challenging the independent actions of the City Manager, as directed by the Mayor, in the interest of maintaining the authority of City Council over its own budget, and in the interest of reinforcing the democratic accountability of the City's elected representatives.

Legislative and policy decisions must reside with those who are accountable to the people for them, not with appointed staff. As we gain experience with the interpretation of the strong Mayor powers contained in the new City of Toronto Act 2006, it is essential that the authority of City Council and the role of City Councillors not be undermined by administrative fiat. Left unchecked, I believe that this represents a dangerous and slippery slope that will inevitably lead to the undermining of local democracy.

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Media Contact:
Michael Walker – 416-392-7906
Pierre D'Aoust – 416-338-5257