Toronto's draft budget no good for the homeless or seniors, forum hears

Inside Fighting Toronto residents needing help for after getting kicked off the streets

People who "don't tolerate the immorality of allowing our fellow Torontonians to sleep in the streets" are being cut off from emergency shelter spaces, St. Paul's Councillor Joe Mihevc said every shelter bed is needed – and then some.

"I'm hopeful continued community pressure can help council make the right decision," Mihevc promised.

Meanwhile, there are still 90,000 households in the city waiting for affordable housing, and the budget doesn't do enough for seniors, Mihevc added.

"More and more seniors are joining the ranks of the poor." Mihevc said.

She argued councillors either have to choose "insane cuts" to services for Toronto's most vulnerable, or agree to raise property taxes to fund those services.

"People don't want to pay more in property taxes, but talk to them about the TTC, or threatened services such as transit, and they say yes," Mihevc said.

In 2015, Toronto City Council unanimously backed an anti-poverty strategy. To support it, agencies and organizations were asked to create an anti-poverty fund, which would receive money from the city, regional and provincial governments.

Closing Downsview Dells, a shelter where homeless men from downtown's Seaton House live after getting kicked off the streets, is one of the TTC's big changes in the city's proposed 2017 budget, but Mihevc said that could be a "nightmare" for the men who previously benefited from the service.

"If Toronto doesn't change its anti-poverty strategy, to support a greenhouse gas reduction goal, in 2017, it could be a $71 million a year cut to homelessness prevention programs," Mihevc said.

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