

# No progress in Toronto civic strike talks

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People in Toronto appear to be settling in for a long civic workers strike and garbage pileup, with Thursday marking the 11th day of the dispute.

The two sides are still talking, but neither side is reporting any progress.

The strike has shut down many key city services — garbage collection, city-run daycare centres, community centres and swimming pools have all been affected.

On June 22, 24,000 city workers went out on strike to back demands for a new contract. They are members of two CUPE unions that represent both inside and outside workers.

"The city and the workers have to decide what they want to do, because the stress is on both sides and eventually something will come about," Wayne Nittery said as he struggled to drag two large garbage bags along a road to a temporary dump site.

Maria Augimeri and other city councillors say they're impressed by people's resilience and creativity — like the group of parents shut out of the Ancaster Child Care Centre in the city's north end.

"The moms of five or six families have gotten together and they are making makeshift child-care arrangements for themselves and spelling each other off," she said.

The last time Toronto faced a civic strike was in 2002. But things were different then.

Pope John Paul was on his way to Toronto, along with about a million Catholic teens, for World Youth Day.

"The weather conditions were hot and the strike lasted for 16 days. The province stepped in to end it because the Pope was coming to the city. We don't have a Pope coming this time," said Coun. Case Ootes, who was deputy mayor seven years ago.

This time there's no international pressure for a settlement.

"It looks like it's so going to be a fairly long strike," said Ootes, "which is not surprising, given the demands of the union and the position of the city, which are miles apart."

Torontonian Edgar Warren has figured out his own way to cope. He spends 45 minutes a week transporting garbage in a wagon meant for a child.

"I had to bring the garbage down with my wife and kids and it's in my kids wagon because I don't drive. Now I have to wash my kid's wagon," he said.

The unions and the city are reported to be locked into their positions, with two major issues keeping them from reaching a settlement.

The city is asking the unions to drop a clause in their contract that allows them to bank sick-leave days and the union is asking for a pay increase in line with those given to other city workers in the past year.



*Striking city worker Elliott Davis assists residents by piling garbage they have dropped off at the Commissioners Road transfer station in Toronto. (Frank Gunn/Canadian Press)*