

## 36 days on strike, 48,900 tonnes of trash, and for what?

Current employees allowed to keep banked sick days in three-year deal that also includes a 6% raise; workers could be back as early as Friday

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The City of Toronto's current unionized employees will have the option to keep their controversial banked sick days, but new hires will be denied the perk under the terms of a tentative deal workers are expected to vote on tomorrow, The Globe and Mail has learned.

Sources say the potential agreement is three years long – not four as Mayor David Miller and the city proposed publicly earlier in the dispute – and includes pay raises of 6 per cent over three years, slightly more than an earlier public offer, which proposed a 4-per-cent bump in its first three years.

If ratified by workers on Wednesday and city council on Friday, the deal would end the longest strike in Toronto's history, a dispute that shut down garbage collection, city-owned daycares, swimming pools, ferries and a host of other public services. Workers could be back on the job as early as Friday, and services are expected to resume over the following week so long as the deal is approved.

The details obtained by The Globe make it apparent the tentative deal is more generous than the public offer Mr. Miller trumpeted July 10, on the 19th day of the strike.



*Peter Power/THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

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But the terms of the proposals remained officially under wraps yesterday, leaving Mr. Miller and the leaders of CUPE Locals 79 and 416 to paint starkly different assessments of what each side achieved.

“The agreement was within the mandate of [council's] employee and labour relations committee and it met the city's bargaining goals,” Mr. Miller said, citing a framework for bargaining that had the broad support of councillors across the political spectrum.

“It will allow us to effectively and efficiently deliver public services into the future.”

Mark Ferguson, the president of CUPE Local 416, which represents outside workers, cast the deal in a different light when he announced his union's tentative deal early yesterday.

“I am so proud of my members for holding the line,” he said, praising the rank and file for giving the bargaining committee the support to “fight back all of the concessions the city sought from us.”



### **Mark Ferguson talks with Brodie Fenlon**

The President of Toronto Civic Employees Union Local 416 CUPE discusses the deal

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The workers' sick-day plan proved a significant stumbling block in negotiations. Under the current contract, workers can bank up to 18 sick days a year and cash them out at retirement.

By denying that option to new hires, the city has capped an unfunded liability that would cost \$250-million in the worst-case scenario as older workers cash out unused sick days when they resign or retire.

The tentative agreement reached yesterday would give existing workers several options to cash out their accumulated sick-day benefits by a certain date, as city staff switch over to a new short-term disability plan.

The city moved non-union employees to a short-term disability plan two years ago.

Like Mr. Ferguson, Local 79 president Ann Dembinski, who represents inside workers, declined to discuss the terms of the deal. She seemed less cheerful about the outcome than Mr. Ferguson, saying bargaining had soured her union's relationship with the municipal government.

“All I will say is this is a deal my membership will be happy with,” she added.

Even though almost 1,000 CUPE members had crossed the picket lines during the strike as of last week, Ms. Dembinski said she was not under pressure to come to hasty terms.

Given how long the strike dragged on, some members of council questioned why council couldn't meet earlier than Friday – the day before the August long weekend and the Caribana parade – so that workers could be back on the job earlier.

“Friday needs to happen Wednesday,” said Councillor Michael Thompson (Ward 37, Scarborough Centre).

A spokesman for Mr. Miller said the meeting needs to be called with 24 hours' notice, after the results of the union vote are released.

Without knowing the full details of the deal, some councillors said they were not ready to endorse it yet.

“There is a huge hole to fill [in the city budget] next year and affordability is an ongoing concern,” said Councillor Karen Stintz (Ward 16, Eglinton-Lawrence). “There are still several members of council that do question if the settlement is affordable.”



### **Brodie Fenlon on strike developments**

Globe's Toronto City Hall reporter discusses the end to the 36-day strike by the city's outside workers

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At his news conference yesterday, Mr. Miller would only say the deal is in line with recent public-sector contracts.

Earlier this month, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and its union agreed to a wage package of 7.75 per cent over four years, the same as for provincial government employees.

Last week, Windsor and its CUPE locals agreed to 6.3 per cent over four years, with some lump-sum payments, ending a 101-day strike.

City manager Joe Pennachetti is expected to release more details later this week about when and how municipal services will resume.

Temporary garbage dumps in city parks will stay open for a few more days, but Mr. Miller urged residents to try to hold onto their garbage to avoid stretching the coming cleanup effort.

City officials refused to name a date for a return to regular pickup of garbage and recycling, but next week is a likely start.

Mr. Miller said the city is working on some kind of rebate on garbage user fees, but, once again ruled out a property-tax rebate or break next year.

“This strike was a difficult period for Toronto,” Mr. Miller said. “We now must focus on moving forward,” he added, thanking Torontonians for their “patience and understanding.”