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David Miller, master negotiator

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Two weeks ago, I [compared](#) David Miller to Rob Babcock in this space. Babcock's [wiki entry](#) starts with the following line: "Rob Babcock (born ca. 1953) is an assistant general manager with the Minnesota Timberwolves of the NBA and is regarded as one of the worst GM's in NBA history."

I made the comparison between Miller and Babcock in mid-July right after Miller released the city's offer of a 7.2 per cent pay increase over four years and a partial payout of the sick-day policy. My quippy point being Miller wasn't being tough with the unions (as he claimed at the time), rather he was already giving away the farm and was a terrible negotiator.

That was then.

Presuming the [report](#) in today's Globe is correct, Miller gave the unions 6 per cent over three-years. At a time of zero-inflation. At a time when the city has no money. On top of the richest public sector union deals in the country. If every one percent pay increase represents roughly \$30-million in cost, compounding annually, this is hundreds of millions of dollars in additional cost over the next three years. Again, for a city that can't afford it.

But there's more. The way labour negotiations work at the city is council delegates their authority with clear parameters to the city's labour relations committee. The labour committee (which is chaired by some guy named David Miller) then gives the city's negotiators marching orders.

So what were the parameters council gave David Miller? A 1 per cent pay increase in year one, 1 per cent in year two, 2 per cent in year three and 3 per cent in year four. That adds up to 7 per cent over four years, with the biggest increase happening in the out-year (which is important from a costing perspective). That wasn't a goal. That wasn't a "see what you can do." That was the maximum he was allowed to spend.

In other words, if the numbers in the Globe today are correct, David Miller had no authority to make this offer.

More importantly to those of you who don't care about the "rule of law" or council process, how does David Miller intend to pay for this deal?

This isn't an empty rhetorical or populist question; the city is broke. It was broke before this deal, it's more broke now. Hundreds of millions of dollars more broke.

So to summarize:

1. David Miller didn't get any concessions from the union during this strike. It was a completely wasted opportunity. If we were going to have the pain of the strike, at the very least we should have gotten some benefit from it in terms of fiscal sustainability for our city;
2. David Miller didn't have the authority to settle at the price that has been reported in today's Globe; and
3. David Miller will either have to raise taxes, cut services or go beg another level of government for money to pay for his rich deal.

I think I owe Rob Babcock an appology.