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## **Toronto on strike: Local 416 to vote, workers may be back Friday**

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*By Allison Hanes, National Post*

After a "gruelling" day hammering out how its striking members will return to work at the city, Toronto's outdoor workers will vote on their contract today.

Presumably this means city council can also meet to consider and ratify their collective agreement tomorrow, since it is already scheduled to approve the deal for inside workers.

The scheduling of the vote by Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 416 is a positive sign Toronto's 39-day civic strike may soon, indeed, be over, after hanging in the balance yesterday.

On Wednesday, Local 416, representing 6,000 outside workers postponed their ratification vote over disagreements with the city's back-to-work protocol – mainly, the use of private contractors to clean-up temporary dump sites and the city's determination to prosecute lawbreakers during the strike.

CUPE Local 79, representing 24,000 inside workers, approved their contract but refused to abandon their picket lines today in solidarity with their 416 brethren.

Also, city councillors expressed outrage over the terms of the collective agreements, threatening to vote down contracts containing a controversial option for workers to keep banking up to 18 sick days a year.

“The last two days have been grueling and necessary to ensure our members return to work with collective agreement protection,” said Local 416 president Mark Ferguson said in a statement.

In an unorthodox move, the union has agreed that, should the majority of members vote to ratify, they will return to work on Friday morning prior to ratification by Toronto council. Likely this means inside workers will be back on the job tomorrow too.

Members of the local will vote on ratification of the tentative agreement on Thursday, July 30 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Ontario Federation of Labour Building, 15 Gervais Drive, Toronto.