

## Toronto on strike: Strikers greet deal with cheers

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[CUPE](#), [CUPE Locals 416 and 79](#), [Toronto on strike](#)

*By Katherine Laidlaw, National Post*

When Trish Daikopoulos, listening to her car radio, heard the CUPE 79 leader announcing a tentative deal, she shrieked with excitement over the blaring stereo, drawing cheers from union members picketing in yesterday's sunshine at the Dufferin waste transfer station.

The reaction was a common one throughout the city, with union members breathing a collective sigh of relief at the news that CUPE 79 and 416 municipal workers, who have been on strike for the past 35 days, had both reached deals and would soon be heading back to work.

Ten smiling strikers pleasantly waved drivers into the station to drop off their trash, even before hearing news of the deal.

"It's a good day. Let everyone go by, it's a good day," Ms. Daikopoulos, a child services caseworker, told fellow pickets, some of whom sported "CUPE 79" red scarves but whose placards were noticeably absent.

But some workers expressed caution. Steve Pasceri, a city landscaper who belongs to Local 416, said because he has worked for the city for less than 10 years, his sick bank would be cut if the city got its way. He said he's not sure if he's going to vote to ratify the deal because he hadn't seen any details of it yet.

"I do [have a sick bank] but I could be losing it. I have to suffer?" he said. "Hopefully the agreement somehow covers my sick bank loss."

As cars continued to line up and drop off trash, city managers hauled the bursting bags into a truck waiting by the station. Alan Kerr, a city planner, said his relationship with picketers was mostly positive, even though they often made dumpers wait for different periods of time to drop off their bags.

"They continually changed their own protocol, but it doesn't really affect us," he said. "I think everybody's feeling tired. I know I'm tired. It's tiring emotionally. I miss my family."

Alex Christian, a driver who came to drop off garbage, said he's been to the station nearly every day since the strike started and he's disappointed with how long the city allowed the strike to continue. "My issue is that our 'great' mayor did absolutely squat. He's made a mockery of our city," he said.

Ms. Daikopoulos said she's hoping to be back to work by Friday. She needs to be, she said, because the strike has taken a dire toll on her finances. "I'm living on my credit card," Ms. Daikopoulos said. "I shop for food on it. I don't know how I'm going to pay it off."



Michelle Sexton, a full-time support assistant for a citywide after-school program, said she thought the strike took its toll on members, and she's looking forward to going back to work.

"It was hard on the back and feet for a lot of people, walking on the cement. I walk the line with a social worker. She misses her clients. I miss the people that I work with every day," she said. "You wish for a vacation but it's not the same thing."

Ms. Daikopoulos said she doesn't regret going on strike, but she's not ready to do it again anytime soon. "I hope I never, ever, ever go out on strike again," she said.