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## Take new deal or we'll impose it, city tells workers

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David Rider

The Mayor Rob Ford administration has an ultimatum for 6,000 city workers — surrender almost all job security and more, or have the concessions imposed anyway at 12:01 a.m. Sunday.

The threat — extremely unusual in the public sector and regarded as a way to get workers to accept an offer or force them to go on strike — seems to remove any chance of the city locking out the outside workers this weekend.

Bruce Anderson, the city's head of human resources, told reporters Friday the demands were tabled Thursday night after months of bargaining to replace the contract with Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 416.

The contract expired Dec. 31.

"All employees are expected to continue to work and perform their duties and provide the services to the public," Anderson said. "Those new terms and conditions that we implement (will) apply to them" when they turn up for work starting Sunday, the first day a strike or lockout could legally happen.

Deputy Mayor Doug Holyday added: "The only difference to the taxpayer might be that we'll run in a more efficient way and the cost to run the city will be less."

CUPE Local 416 president Mark Ferguson called the administration a "bully."

He rejected demands that would "gut" the previous contract.

The terms include increased pay over four years (the union offered a three-year wage freeze); removal of ironclad job security provisions for any worker with less than 22 years' seniority; removal of union consent for shift changes; reduced sick pay, optical and dental benefits, and the city no longer collecting dues for the union. Ferguson said he had felt hope earlier Thursday when city negotiators reacted well to the union's offer of concessions including giving up job security for workers with less than five years' seniority. Hours later came "a provocative, threatening final offer," to change terms and conditions however the city sees fit, he said.

"As early as Sunday, the city could start firing or laying off hundreds of workers across the city."

The union said it has no "immediate" plans for a strike vote, which would take several days to organize.

At a pair west-end arenas Friday night, city workers said there were no plans for a wildcat strike or any disruption of service this weekend.

"The guys don't want to strike," said one worker, who did not want to be identified for fear of disciplinary action. "But we don't want to lose everything."

The worker said there has been no notification sent out of a potential strike vote and that picketing plans haven't been made.

Another arena worker said a strike would be messy. Picket lines would block access to the arenas, letting few inside and never enough to play a complete game. Both the city and the union have committed to keep talking. Anderson said the last day of bargaining, when a deadline looms, is like "light years" and significant progress can be made. "Obviously we have some room around the edges to reach an agreement. We expect to try to do that in the next day and a half."

Ford's main target is the clause preventing permanent workers from being laid off because of contracting out or technological innovation. He has said he wants to contract out a host of services and shed about 7,000 workers from the city's 50,000-strong workforce.

The outcome is expected to set the stage for talks with the city's unionized inside workers, library staff and community centre employees.



With a Sunday deadline looming, a work stoppage seems imminent in the City of Toronto as both sides dig in.

**With files from Liam Casey**