

# Toronto strike contract offer vote could be risky: expert

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## [CBC News](#)

Putting Toronto's latest contract offer directly to striking union members could be a dangerous step, says a labour expert.

At least one Toronto city councillor supports the idea, but York University professor David Doorey says provincial law is very clear — the City of Toronto would have only one chance to put its proposal to a vote. If it's turned down, it could mean a much longer strike.

"Sometimes when an employer goes around the union and puts its vote directly to the workers, it can cause the union and the workers to actually become more entrenched in their position. So there's always a risk in that option. But it is an option the government might consider at some point," said Doorey.

It's an option Coun. Denzil Minnan-Wong says would be a good idea.



*Trash piles continue to grow in Toronto as the strike by city workers enters its fourth week. (Canadian Press)*

"The offer is fair. I can tell you that I've spoken to a number of employees. They'd like to get back to work and they would like to see an end to this strike," Minnan-Wong said.

Last Friday, Toronto Mayor David Miller made public the city's latest offer to striking members of CUPE

Local 416 and CUPE Local 79.

The two locals, which represent about 30,000 city workers, have been off the job for more than three weeks.

The proposed offer released Friday contains wage increases and language aimed at changing a benefit in the existing contract that would see an end to some union members being able to bank sick leave.

The union has said the monetary offer isn't enough and has previously said it will not negotiate away hard-won benefits from previous contracts.

However, the idea of going over the heads of the union negotiators and asking the rank-and-file to vote directly on the offer is a risky step to take, according to Doorey.

"In the sense that if the members vote against it, it can send a strong signal to the employer that it has to go further, it has to give more than what it was prepared to do and what it claimed was its final offer," said Doorey.



*Some residents have rented dumpsters for their neighbourhoods to get rid of garbage. (Priya Sankaran/CBC)*

Both York University in Toronto and OC Transpo in Ottawa have asked recently for a ministry-supervised vote. In both cases, unionized workers turned down the employers' offer.

But Minnan-Wong said the risk might be worth taking.

"What I'm hearing from a number of employees [is that] they would like to get back to work and they see the city's offer as reasonable. Yet they don't have the capacity to make their views known. So this allows an opportunity to go directly to the membership, and directly to the employees, and potentially end this strike and bring everybody back to work," said Minnan-Wong.

About 24,000 of the city's 30,000 unionized workers have been off the job since June 22. They include workers at city-run daycares, garbage collectors, day camp counsellors and water and sewer workers, as well as most of the city's clerical staff.

About 6,000 employees work in jobs that are deemed essential services and are still on the job.