

First, a ticket ... then, a very long wait

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Staff Reporter

Clifford Pendin had no idea the lineup would be so long. All he wanted was to argue a fine from the traffic ticket mailed to him after his son ran a red light.

But the civic workers' strike has closed all facilities save this one, on Markham Rd. in Scarborough, just north of Highway 401, forcing frustrated drivers across the city to descend on this building. Yesterday, a line of about 70 people stretched from the door to the sidewalk, about 30 metres away.

Pendin, a 64-year-old diabetic, took the day off work and left his home near Islington Ave., on the other side of Toronto, around 8:30 a.m. At 11 a.m., he was still in line waiting.

"I lose my day's pay. And I'm a diabetic person, a sickly person. I didn't get to use my meds. I didn't know it would take all this time," he said, sitting in a crowded waiting room.

The dozens of people waiting with him were doubly aggrieved: first, by what they saw as unjust traffic tickets; then, by an unending wait.

Danny Tauro, 44, standing near the back of the line outside, found a third reason for being annoyed: nearby picketing city workers. "It's crazy that they're stopping people from going into the parking lot," he said.

Striking workers declined to comment.

Other locations to contest tickets and apply for court dates – Metro Hall, North York Civic Centre and York Civic Centre – remain closed by the strike, now in its 13th day.

Systems consultant James Thomas, who also took the day off work, was frustrated by the lineup.

"It's a major undertaking," he said. "The fine is for \$90, but it's not the money – it's the demerit points."

But not everyone was outraged, particularly those who were there for parking tickets: They were waved past the line.

Fariba Rawhani, 50, wasn't too worried, either. She showed up and asked a security guard: "What's the wait?" His reply: "About one hour and 20 minutes."

She laughed. "I should have brought the suntan lotion and made a day of it."



DAVID COOPER/TORONTO STAR

Motorists had to wait more than an hour to contest their traffic tickets at the only facility still dealing with such complaints since the city strike began. (July 3, 2009)

Strike D.I.Y. - It's your call

Tip: *I don't support the workers but they will get what they want so why not give it to them now? The only other thing is for the people of Toronto to work together to break the union. They are in their second week; by the fourth their mortgages are due. I advise everyone to contact (Ontario Premier Dalton) McGuinty and get them ordered back to work.*

Is it a good idea?

You can reach McGuinty by emailing him at dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. But the premier has said he won't legislate striking employees back to work because he wants a mediated solution. A better idea might be to call your MPP because it would require the participation of all three provincial parties to legislate employees back to work.