

## City dropped all concessions, union says

If true, Miller has explaining to do, councillor says after settlements are reached with two striking locals

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### Tentative deal reached to end strike

Mayor David Miller says a tentative deal has been reached between the city and its striking workers. (July 27, 2009)

CUPE Local 416 president Mark Ferguson said today that the union fought back all of the concessions the city had sought but one councillor says that if that is true, Mayor David Miller has some explaining to do.

Ferguson wouldn't give specifics of the tentative deal reached with the city early today, but said that the support of his members gave the "bargaining committee the ability to fight back all of the concessions," the city sought.

"As I have said from the beginning, we will end this strike like we began," he told a news conference this morning at the Scarborough hotel where his local's negotiation took place.

Pat Daley, a spokesperson for Local 416, backed up Ferguson's statement that the union had managed to "fight back all of the concessions the city sought from us."

All 118 pages of concessions? she was asked.

"Yes," she said.

Councillor Doug Holyday said this afternoon that the union must be putting a positive spin on the deal. And if they aren't, Mayor David Miller would have a lot of explaining to do.

Holyday, a member of the city's labour relations committee that gives direction to the bargaining officials, said he spoke to the mayor early today and the impression left was that the deal was done "within the parameters set by the labour relations committee."

Those parameters clearly included an end to the sick bank provisions that was a big sticking point in the talks.



ADRIEN VECZAN/THE TORONTO STAR

*Humera (left), Donna (middle), Patrick (right) and Musa (foreground), members of Local 416 and 79 at the temporary dump of Etienne Brzle Park in Toronto, react to the news that temporary settlements have been reached in negotiations with the city.*

"They couldn't have settled something contrary without coming back to the labour relations committee," said Holyday.

"If we were to take all the concessions off the table, let them keep sick bank and pay higher than we want to, the show would be over. The mayor would walk the plank. The mayor would be done. And he would have a tough time to get the deal ratified at council."

The tentative deal was reached this morning to end the strike by Toronto's garbage collectors and other outside workers after 35 long and miserable days.

Ferguson said the next step would be for the city to make a deal with striking inside workers represented by CUPE Local 79, something that happened early this afternoon.

"We need to do a ratification vote and we need put that framework (offer) in front of our members," Ferguson said this morning.

"A ratification vote could occur as early as Wednesday."

It's expected that some services such as the island ferry service could reopen within 24 hours. Other services could take longer.

Ann Dembinski, president of Local 79 representing the inside workers, said her members should be pleased with the agreement, but wouldn't specifically say whether the union had succeeded in beating back all the concessions the city had been seeking.

But Dembinski said the bitterness created by the long strike won't heal quickly.

"Labour relations has been set back decades," she told reporters this afternoon.

Both sides accused each other of dragging their feet in talks before the strike began, and while it was in progress.

But Dembinski said workers should be able to return to work quickly once the deal is voted on.

"We're hoping if we ratify on Wednesday that we get our members back to work on Thursday," she said.

City council will also have to meet to ratify the deal.

Miller told a news conference that council won't meet to ratify the agreement until after the union locals have voted, which would mean a special council meeting could be held on Friday.

Ferguson also said that the strike had set labour relations in the city of Toronto back decades.

"There is a lot of ill will between the city of Toronto and this local union," he said. "It's going to take a great deal of time and effort and dedication to repair the relationship."

The settlement with Local 416 came after around-the-clock bargaining sparked by a 48-hour ultimatum that Ferguson issued Friday.

Although the midnight deadline came and went, a one-hour extension requested by city negotiators stretched until Ferguson spoke to the media at 8:30 a.m. today.

Getting the city back to normal will be a huge task, one that is expected to take several weeks before everything is running normally.

City officials have said they have a plan to begin the cleanup the moment striking workers return to work, but have remained tight-lipped about the details.

But, now that a tentative agreement has been hammered out, clearing out garbage dump sites and resuming regular garbage pick-up is high on the list.

*With files from John Spears*