

CITY WALKOUT: DAY 31

Dumps, recycled

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The city should clean up and reuse existing dump sites rather than open more temporary dumps, members of city council's right-wing Responsible Government Group urged yesterday.

Councillor Case Ootes said a cleanup likely would require hiring outside contractors. Any such move likely would be opposed by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 416, which represents garbage collectors, he conceded.

Mayor David Miller rejected the idea, saying it posed too many challenges.

'SOME PROGRESS'

Mayor David Miller and Ann Dembinski, who leads the striking inside workers union Local 79, came perilously close to agreeing with each other Monday, something that hasn't happened since the strike began.

"I think there was some progress over the weekend. That's positive," Miller said. "There are thousands of people out there who aren't working, (whom) we need working."

Dembinski used the same word: "We made some progress, so I'm hopeful on that." She was quick to add that the progress was modest and came slowly.

NO WAITING

With pickets maintaining their usual post in front of city hall, a group of about 20 tourists approached. "You're from out of town? Okay, go right on through," said one of the strikers.

Huh? It turns out some picket teams at Toronto City Hall are letting tourist groups, the elderly and people with small children through their lines without delay.

CUPE spokesperson Pat Daley said picket teams have their own protocols, so the rules may change from shift to shift. But many let the elderly pass so seniors don't have to wait in the hot sun, Daley said.

FARE DISPUTE

Toronto's three operating welfare offices have been issuing TTC fare during the strike to those who request it, city spokesman Kevin Sack says.

But a homeless woman who visited the north Etobicoke office for help last Thursday because she lost her wallet said she was denied the fare.

As a result, she said, she had to take a taxi from the office near Pearson airport to the nearest cheque-cashing outlet in order to cash her \$300 emergency welfare cheque.

"I'm not sure what happened in that case," Sack said.

TALLYING COSTS

Mayor David Miller says he's still opposed to asking the province to force strikers back to work and imposing an arbitrated contract. He told reporters yesterday that arbitrated settlements tend to be expensive, pushing labour costs up about 4 per cent when benefits are included.

"If we had a settlement that was at that level for 2009 and 2010, in next year's budget we would have to cut public services," he said. That could mean "laying off the younger workers in both of these locals. That's not an acceptable result."