

## Farmers 'thrilled' after city relents on markets

Produce vendors shut out since strike began will be allowed to return to civic squares

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CITY HALL BUREAU

The city has backed down and will now allow farmers' markets to go ahead at civic squares.

The farmers are allowed back at Metro Hall tomorrow and Nathan Phillips Square next Wednesday, after being shut out since the city workers' strike began June 22.

"We're thrilled," said Cathy Bartolic, executive director of the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association. "It's huge."

Over the past week, the city had offered a litany of reasons – from the need for public health inspectors to electrical hookups – why the markets had to be cancelled.

But Milton-area strawberry grower Bert Andrews didn't buy any of them. Andrews argued the vendors could get by without electrical hookups and were willing to clean up afterward.

He said it was unfair of the city to bar the produce vendors while letting a jazz festival use Nathan Phillips Square over the past week, as well as the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition on July 10-12.

"We're managing our own waste. We're renting our own porta-potties and dumpsters," said Kelly Rintoul, executive director of the art exhibition. The event expects to attract 100,000 visitors over the three days, she said.

The farmers' pleas for similar consideration had gone nowhere until yesterday, when city manager Joe Pennachetti disclosed that the city had relented.

After discussions with organizers, the city announced that six markets would be permitted on city squares:

- City Hall: Wednesdays starting July 8
- Metro Hall: Thursdays starting tomorrow Etobicoke Civic Centre: Saturdays starting July 4
- East York Civic Centre: Tuesdays starting July 7
- Scarborough Civic Centre: Tuesdays starting July 7
- North York Civic Centre: Thursdays starting tomorrow

The markets will operate on a reduced level, with no city support, and farmers will need to bring their own tables and be responsible for cleaning up.

*With files from Vanessa Lu*