CITY WALKOUT: DAY 24

Is Smitherman aiming for City Hall?

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Toronto has another politician stalking its streets with a broom.

Deputy premier George Smitherman, MPP for Toronto Centre, helped about 30 residents on a cleanup in his riding yesterday.

When asked why he was doing work normally performed by striking city workers, Smitherman replied:

"Why is that a concern? I think that a lot of people are going to say: Hey, there's a guy who actually knows how to operate a broom.'"

Mayor David Miller used a broom as a symbol in his 2003 campaign for mayor.

DAVE CHIDLEY/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE PHOTO

George Smitherman

Rumours have circulated for years that Smitherman might run for mayor, but yesterday he insisted he was on the streets as humble Citizen Smitherman, and said citizens shouldn't be denied the right to clean up public spaces.

Mark Ferguson, president of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 416, said Smitherman's actions "aren't the least bit helpful."

"Any time anyone engages in strikebreaking or scabbing, it only leads to a more protracted dispute," Ferguson said.

"Being the deputy premier, you would think he would have an understanding of these actions being problematic from the perspective of extending a labour disruption, and that he ought to know better."

A spokesman for Miller said: "People want to see their city clean, and that's understandable. We certainly don't discourage that."

SPECIAL MEETING URGED

A group of councillors is urging Mayor David Miller to call a special meeting to address the city business that has not been put off because of the strike.

The strike forced the cancellation of the city council meeting scheduled for July 6 and 7, which was supposed to be the last one for the summer. So far, 18 councillors – most of them critics of the mayor – want the special meeting. A total of 23 are needed to hold a meeting.

Meanwhile, Councillor Doug Holyday's attempt to call a meeting to roll back a 2.42 per cent pay increase for politicians has failed