

## Strike hampers housing project

Without city permits, work on YWCA complex for women and children will likely grind to a halt

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Construction on an \$80-million non-profit housing complex for 300 vulnerable women and children will likely grind to a halt in two weeks because striking Toronto planning staff haven't issued the necessary permits, says the YWCA Toronto, which broke ground on the project in January.

The delay will cost the social service agency more than \$1 million in extra construction fees and penalties – money it doesn't have, said Joan White, the organization's director of housing, support and development.

"We're operating on a very tight budget, and this is very stressful," she said.

The agency, which is raising an ambitious \$15 million for the project during tough economic times, is still scrambling to find donors for the final \$5 million, she said.

Costs could run even higher if delays push work on the foundation and building shell into the colder winter months, she added.

One option the agency's lawyers are considering is to proceed without the building permits and hire private engineers to certify the work, White said.

The city's website notes that any construction during the strike without proper permits is subject to penalties or a removal order. But city spokesman Rob Andrusevich said the city is working with the YWCA to ensure the project continues safely.

"We've tried to give them a practical way of moving forward," he said, referring to the use of outside structural engineers. "But the word is caution. It has to meet the building code."

The Elm St. project was on the verge of receiving full site plan approval from the city – including foundation and structural building permits – just as city workers walked off the job June 22. At the time, city planning staff said the permits would be ready by July 30.

But even if the strike is settled in the coming days, White said, staff would need five weeks to finish the paperwork.

Scheduled to open in 2011, the complex includes three residential towers, YWCA Toronto's new administrative offices and a public auditorium.



*Getting garbage out of Chinatown As the city strike continues, the Toronto Chinatown Business Improvement Area is providing weekly garbage removal for members. Video by Randy Risling. (July 15, 2009)*