

CITY WALKOUT: DAY 32

Strike refunds fall short, critics say

Jul 23, 2009 04:30 AM

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In a sop to parents frustrated by services lost due to the city strike, Mayor David Miller is refunding the money they paid for day camps, swimming lessons and youth leadership programs.

But critics declared the announcement too late, with one city councillor calling the move a "blowoff" when Toronto residents should be getting tax rebates for services lost over the past 32 days.

"I'm sure the mayor is hearing the call for refunds and he seems to want to make a peace offer, but it has to go broader than just camp programs," said Councillor Michael Thompson.

Miller told reporters yesterday the city hasn't decided whether to reimburse for other services such as garbage collection "because there are a number of alternatives we could pursue," but he refused to elaborate.

Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong called the decision to refund money paid for summer programs but not other user-fee-based services "inconsistent."

"The recreational programs are user fees and garbage collection is now a user fee. You pay for use," he said. "It's inconsistent to cherry-pick one over the other."

The city has started returning money for programs scheduled during the weeks of June 22 – the day the strike started – to July 17, inclusive.

Though the city wouldn't say yesterday, it's estimated that thousands of families will be repaid.

Daniela Trifunovic-Mavromihelakis, who paid \$2,000 so her three children could attend seven weeks of city-run camp that would have started June 29, said the city never notified her about the reimbursement.

"But that wasn't the point. I still have to look for constant accommodation," she said.

The city is expected today to answer questions about how many families will be getting reimbursements, how much money is involved, and what will happen for those who had paid for programs scheduled beyond July 17.

With files from Danielle Wong