

## Tricky details delayed deal

Settlement hung up on back-to-work protocol, memo of understanding

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The devil is in the details and those details, ironed out late last night, held up settlement of the strike by Toronto's outside workers.

When the city and Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 416 said on Monday they had a deal, two key elements were, in fact, missing.

The two sides still didn't have a signed memorandum of understanding outlining what they had agreed to. And they hadn't finalized a protocol on how to get workers back on the job.

Usually, these details are cleaned up quickly after an agreement in principle is reached.

By comparison, in Windsor last Thursday, the city and 1,800 garbage workers reached a deal to end a 101-day strike. That day, council reviewed the deal and a prioritized cleanup plan. The next day, workers endorsed the deal and the strike was officially over.

Windsor Mayor Eddie Francis said paying for trash to be picked up by private companies during the strike paid off.

"We wanted to be in a position post-strike where we could immediately begin delivering services to the residents," he said last week.

But as talks progressed yesterday in Toronto, it was clear the two sides were far from agreement, especially on the tricky issue of whether private contractors should be allowed to clean up the mess left by the strike.

After talks that reached early into yesterday morning failed to reach an agreement, the two sides caught a few hours sleep and started again.

Adding urgency to the negotiations, at 10 a.m. the city dispatched two top officials to the table: deputy city manager Richard Butts, and Geoff Rathbone, general manager of solid waste.

But as the hours dragged by, it was clear the outstanding issues, especially contracting out, were difficult ones.

Under an agreement worked out after previous disputes, city workers would do the cleanup exclusively for the first seven days, but private contractors could be hired if work remained after that.

Negotiators were trying to hammer out a similar agreement.

"When a guy's been on strike for six weeks, you can't just let someone else come in and do his work," one union official said.

Discipline was another tricky issue. The two sides had a hard time agreeing on whether strikers accused of serious misbehaviour on the picket line could be disciplined when they go back to work.

A few face criminal charges. Mayor David Miller said any criminal charges will proceed but told reporters that on the more minor disciplinary measures "it's time to move forward" rather than dwell on past incidents.

