

City walkout: Day 23

Union awaits reply to counteroffer

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John Spears

CITY HALL BUREAU

Mayor David Miller says he sees "a little bit of light" in efforts to end the three-week old municipal workers' strike.

Ann Dembinski, who leads the city's inside workers, says her union local has made a proposal that "could settle this strike."

And officials from the outside workers' local say they're too busy bargaining to talk.

Does that add up to progress? Perhaps, but there was still some angry rhetoric to dampen the optimism.

"There's been some movement at the table on the weekend," Miller told reporters yesterday.

"I think the offer that we went public with on Friday .. is fair and reasonable and should produce a settlement.

"From my perspective, there hadn't really been any meaningful movement on the key issues from January until this weekend.

"There's now a little bit of light. I wouldn't go further than that. I'm neither optimistic nor pessimistic."

Dembinski, president of Local 79 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, said the union is doing its part to strike a deal, but the city is dragging its feet.

Her local handed the city a comprehensive offer at 4:30 p.m. Sunday and was still waiting for a reply, she said.

"We've put something forward we thought could settle this strike. For a city that says they're anxious to get the service back, we're quite shocked. They really need to get serious about reaching a deal instead of pussyfooting around."

The local's offer "addresses every outstanding issue," she said. "It's something that could resolve this strike."

Allison Gifford, spokeswoman for Local 416, said talks were continuing, but president Mark Ferguson was not doing interviews.

"This is just a day that they want to hunker down and get to work," she said.



STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR

Residents who live in the area post signs on public waste street furniture begging people not to dump in or beside the trash on Queen Street East in Toronto.

With files from Vanessa Lu