

Toronto on strike: CUPE tries to buy some sympathy with radio ads

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[Five Things, Toronto on strike](#)

Toronto's striking civic workers have launched a pair of radio ads designed to tug at the heartstrings of city residents about the unfairness of the city's contract offer. The National Post's Allison Hanes reveals five things Torontonians should know about the union's message:

1 The radio spots began running on five Toronto stations this week. Pat Daley, a CUPE spokesperson, would not divulge their cost. "That's our business," said Ms. Daley, who acknowledged it was funded by the CUPE national strike fund.

2 Bargaining continues – albeit slowly – between the city and Locals 79 and 416, representing 24,000 indoor and 6,000 outdoor unions respectively. The current scheme allows full-time city staff to bank up to 18 unused sick days a year and cash out up to six month's accumulated time at the end of their careers. The city wants to buy out workers (for an average \$8,500) and institute a sick leave program.

3 The CUPE ads are aimed both at the public, to gain their sympathy, and the city, to counter its spin on about the contract offer. "I think there's perception out there that there's this big bank of sick days and everybody's going to get this big payout," said Ms. Daley. "In Local 416, I would say probably most of the members don't have very many banked sick days because of the kind of work they do they use their sick days. The same with people who work in public health, in child care... and even people who work at an information counter. They're all coming in contact with the public. They get sick so they use those sick days."

4 One ad addresses the plight of 10,000 part-time workers who CUPE says don't get any sick time. Ms. Daley described its contents: "One is a part-time child-care worker who if she gets sick loses her wages for this time she takes off. She doesn't have any sick days. And instead of treating her fairly, the city's trying to take sick days away from everybody else. So the gist of it is really how is this person ever going to get ahead when we're just fighting to hang on to what we've already got and that all we're asking for is fair treatment."

5 The second spot talks about why some seasonal workers depend on cashing out up to six months' sick time at the end of their careers. Ms. Daley explained: "The other one is about a temporary worker with the city, a seasonal worker who works in parks doing maintenance and who would basically be retiring into poverty... Someone who has 30 years experience and they weren't even allowed to join the pension plan until about 15 years ago... So they would have gone through half their working life before they could join the pension plan. So the only real nest egg they've got is the sick bank and now the city's trying to take that away."