

## Is Windsor deal good omen for T.O.?

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[Toronto on strike](#), [Ont.](#), [Windsor](#)

WINDSOR, Ont. — A tentative agreement was reached early Thursday morning between 1,800 municipal workers and the City of Windsor to end a bitter, 100-day strike that began in April and left residents without garbage collection, public spaces overgrown with waist-high grass and a host of other services.

Union members will vote on the deal tomorrow.

“It’s the best agreement they felt they could reach at the table,” said Canadian Union of Public Employees spokesman Luc Tittley, referring to CUPE Local 543 and 82 presidents Jean Fox and Jim Wood. “They felt they had to bring it to their members.” Neither Fox nor Wood would say if they are recommending acceptance of the deal.

Many in Toronto, where a strike has entered its second month, have been watching events in Windsor with a worried eye, fearing that our dispute will drag on as long as theirs has done.

Mayor David Miller said this morning that a breakthrough in Windsor shows that a settlement in Toronto remains doable. Both the city and indoor and outdoor workers' unions have remained at the bargaining table throughout Toronto's 31-day labour disruption, whereas in Windsor talks broke off earlier on.

"If Windsor can reach an agreement, it should be possible to reach on in Toronto," Mr. Miller said. "As I've been saying for weeks, there needs to be a sense of urgency at the table to find a way to say yes. If it's true that they have in Windsor, that should be a sign that we can in Toronto as well."

The Mayor offered little hint of how things are going in talks between Toronto and CUPE Locals 79 and 416.

News of an end in Windsor suggests that even a long bitter strike has to end some time.

“We’ve done the best job that we can do,” said Mr. Fox, whose Local 543 represents 1,400 inside workers. Mr. Wood said that workers “hopefully get back to work” after Friday.

The two sides announced the proposed settlement after 48 hours of non-stop bargaining. No details of the proposed deal have been released, but a key item in the dispute was maintaining retirement benefits for new hires.

By 9 a.m. Thursday, hundreds of CUPE members had gathered around City Hall and the mood was light compared to the weeks on the picket line.

“We’re hopeful, but we’ll have to see what happens,” said one unidentified member. “At this point, we don’t want to jinx anything.

Provincial mediator John Miller played “a very instrumental part” in the latest round of talks, said Windsor’s lead negotiator Helga Reidel. She will present the tentative deal to city council Thursday afternoon for the employer’s ratification.

The tentative deal comes on the 100th day of the dispute, a day longer than Windsor’s historic Ford strike of 1945 that secured important gains for Canadian autoworkers.

Meanwhile, a strike by municipal workers in Toronto that began on June 22 continues.

Windsor Star and National Post