

## ***Miller lashes out at inside workers***

*The mayor says Local 79's foot-dragging is delaying a resolution to the strike*

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*Using his toughest language since 24,000 city workers went on strike a week ago, Toronto Mayor David Miller lashed out at one of two civic unions for the slow pace of talks.*

At a news conference Monday, Mr. Miller singled out Local 79 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, with about 18,000 members, saying he was “frustrated” at the lack of a formal response to a city wage offer presented just before the June 22 strike.

“Sadly, the delay in responding to city proposals is slowing the bargaining process and delaying a quick end to this strike,” Mr. Miller said.

CUPE 79 president Ann Dembinski quickly shot back, blaming the city for intransigence in the talks to replace contracts that expired last Dec. 31.

“We have told the city of Toronto we are not interested in their substandard monetary offer, which is full of concessions,” she said, citing wage settlements in the range of 3 per cent a year granted other city workers over the past two years. She described the city and its civic unions as “miles apart.”

Should the garbage strike continue, here's a list of dump sites that may be open in the future

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In what appears to be an increasingly personal dimension to the talks, Ms. Dembinski recalled the last civic workers strike in 2002 with another mayor, Mel Lastman.

“We knew who the mayor was then, and the mayor was not pretending to be our friend,” she said, a reference to Mr. Miller’s call for a contract that is “fair” to employees but “affordable” to the city.

As the sharp words heightened fears of no early end to the labour dispute, city officials confirmed the accidental release of a list of potential garbage drop-off sites in parks across the city.

Geoff Rathbone, the city’s general manager of solid waste, told reporters that the 19 sites opened on the weekend are already 10 to 20 per cent full. But he emphasized that the city has “no immediate plans” to add to the roster with a secondary and tertiary list of parks compiled as a contingency before the strike.

“We will have to consider things on a day-to-day basis, but currently the 19 sites are serving our needs,” he said.

On the bargaining front, the pace of talks appears to be quicker with CUPE Local 416, which represents about 6,200 outside workers including garbage collectors. The mayor said discussions are “ongoing,” with some minor issues settled.

By contrast, he painted a sombre picture of relations with local 79, estimating only about six hours of face-to-face talks over the past week.

“That’s why I have expressed frustration today,” he told reporters. “If we are going to reach an agreement that is fair to employees and affordable to the city in these recessionary times ... we need both sides to be there. You can’t negotiate with yourself.”

Ms. Dembinski used very similar language to describe the apparent impasse.



"I can't bargain by myself," she declared, insistent that a deal is not possible without the city backing off its demands. "It takes two parties to negotiate."

Both locals are equally resistant to agreeing to concessions that would end a practice that allows workers to bank 18 sick days a year and cash them out at retirement to a maximum of six months. The city wants to convert to a less expensive, short-term disability plan, similar to those already in place in other municipal jurisdictions..

The two sides are also far apart on proposals that the union fears would allow senior workers to be laid off before younger, lower-paid employees.

A flash mob of dozens of irate residents formed around Christie Pits Park Monday evening, toting signs in protest against their neighbourhood park being made a temporary dump site last Thursday.

"With the rain it's turned into a big garbage soup," said Monica Gupta, chair of the Friends of Christie Pits neighbourhood group. "We're worried about mosquitoes and vermin and we're very concerned about what they're spraying into it."

When a car stopped on the street right in front of the park, backing up traffic for 40 minutes, the gathering turned into an angry confrontation between protesters and people who drove up to drop off bags of trash. Police arrived to cool tempers.

"Everyone's frustrated, that's the end result," Ms. Gupta said.

She [obtained a copy of the leaked list](#) of secondary and tertiary temporary dump sites Monday and warned others in the city that their local park may be next.

"Be aware - it may be coming to a park near your neighbourhood," said Ms. Gupta. "You should not be putting dumps in parks. Parks are for people, not garbage."