

Many services facing shutdown threat

City manager urges patience

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Curbside garbage collection, city-run daycares, community centres and much of city hall would be shut down as early as Monday if Toronto's indoor and outdoor workers go on strike, city officials said yesterday.

The city's contingency plan, unveiled yesterday, suggests life could become very bumpy for many Torontonians.

It would be especially so for parents with children in the city's 57 child-care centres and anyone who needs a permit - including permission to take wedding photos in city parks.

With a looming strike deadline of 12:01 a.m. June 22 - even as negotiators for Toronto and its two civic unions remain at the bargaining table - city manager Joe Pennachetti released a long list of potential closings and urged residents "to be patient."

He said the contingency plan is not a sign that things are going badly in talks with locals 416 (outside workers) and 79 (inside workers) of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

"We don't want a strike and don't believe a strike is necessary," Mr. Pennachetti said, repeating the city's call for a deal that is "fair to employees and affordable to all Torontonians."

He added that "during a recession, demand for city services increases while the revenue to pay for the cost of delivering these services is generally reduced.

"Therefore the cost of our wages and benefits need to reflect what is truly affordable."

Pat Daley, a spokeswoman for the two CUPE locals, said "they are all working hard at the table to reach a negotiated settlement."

In theory, the two sides could negotiate past the deadline into next week.

Toronto Board of Trade president Carol Wilding urged the city and the unions "to be thoughtful in terms of what is appropriate, affordable and sustainable" given the city's financial constraints.

Services provided by the police, fire, the Toronto Transit Commission and homes for the aged would not be affected.

Emergency calls for ambulance and paramedics would continue as usual, with likely delays for non-emergency and low priority calls.

Almost all Toronto Public Library branches would remain open, but five that share facilities with the city would close.

Two others, at City Hall and Metro Hall, would have reduced hours.