

For garbage collectors, wages and benefits vary a lot

Jun 24, 2009 04:30 AM

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There are two kinds of residential garbage collectors in the city: municipal employees walking the picket line in the blazing summer sun and the ones who are working today.

The latter are employed by Turtle Island Recycling, the company the City of Toronto pays more than \$8.5 million a year to pick up waste in Etobicoke, where collection has been contracted out since before amalgamation.

Turtle Island management did not want to talk to the *Star*, but two waste collectors paused briefly to talk about their pay and benefits yesterday.

Their workdays are longer than those of city garbage collectors, their wages lower and their sick pay nonexistent. Never mind bankable sick days.

"I'd rather work for the city," said one, declining to give his name.

He fell off his roof while cleaning an eavestrough two weeks ago and sprained his wrist, which is now wrapped in a tensor bandage. But he did not take any time off.

"Don't come to work, don't get paid," he shrugged.

While his truck hummed noisily, the second driver pointed out another difference between him and a city worker.

"Two-and-half years, haven't had a raise," he said.

TURTLE ISLAND WASTE COLLECTORS

Pay: Varies depending on the kind of truck you drive and bonuses, workers say. One worker makes \$23 an hour, while another said his base wage was \$18 an hour, but that he typically makes around \$21 with bi-weekly bonuses. Bonuses are based on how much weight he lugs and whether he gets to work on time.

Hours: Four-day week. One worker says he usually works 12-hour days.

Benefits: Include health care, dental and eye care.

Sick days: Unpaid. There are no bankable sick days.

Overtime: According to one worker, overtime pay does not begin until after 50 hours.

CITY OF TORONTO WASTE COLLECTORS

Pay: \$25.11 an hour for drivers or loaders of solid waste, up 2.75 to 3.25 per cent annually since 2005.

Hours: Four 10-hour days a week.

Benefits: Extended health includes dental care, life insurance, eye care and physiotherapy.

Sick days: 18 sick days each year; unused days can be banked and cashed in on retirement, subject to certain limits.

Overtime: Time-and-a-half in excess of regularly scheduled workdays or weeks.

Source: CUPE, City of Toronto spokespeople, their last collective agreement.