

## Police won't cut picket line waits

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Things moved more smoothly on the picket lines yesterday, including those at two transfer stations, but the city and its striking unions have yet to agree on how long pedestrians or motorists should wait to pass through.

"We do see quite a bit of variation in terms of the wait times," Geoff Rathbone, general manager of solid waste, said at yesterday's afternoon briefing. "However, just over the last several hours, for example, we've made significant progress at the Dufferin transfer station and good progress at the Scarborough transfer station, so we're quite pleased with that."

Despite complaints from residents and businesses about long waits – especially at transfer stations or to enter city hall's underground parking garage – the city has not sought a court injunction to restrict strikers from hindering passage. At city hall, people are being asked to wait two to five minutes to enter, and sometimes exit, the building.

Toronto Police won't be helping motorists or pedestrians cross picket lines.

"They're there to keep the peace," Const. Tony Vella said earlier this week. "They have to stay neutral. Their job is to ensure public safety."

Vella said officers would act if somebody breaks the law: "If there are two people yelling at each other, then they will intervene to make sure it doesn't escalate."

But things can escalate quickly, as they did Tuesday when a motorist inched his way toward the Bay St. entrance of the underground garage, hitting a striking worker.

Union spokeswoman Charlotte Monardo said pedestrians are generally being held back no more than five minutes, while drivers can face up to a 10-minute wait – for which there is legal precedent.

"We leave it to the discretion of the picket captains," Monardo said. Given the heat, individuals with health concerns, such as those with disabilities, or pregnant women, are not delayed, she said.



*Steve Russell/Toronto Star*

*A Toronto Police car sits outside the Commissioners transfer station after management was refused entry by the picket line. (June 23, 2009)*