
City Council

Notice of Motion

MM38.11	ACTION			Ward: All
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City-Strike Post-Mortem: Request Province of Ontario to Mandate Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as an Essential Service - by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Thompson

- Notice of this Motion has been given.*
- This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Thompson, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Province of Ontario to legislatively mandate that the City of Toronto provision of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) be deemed an essential service under the appropriate provincial labour-relations laws and request that any arbitration proceed using the "final offer selection" approach to arbitration.

Summary

Moving beyond the City of Toronto's six week employee labour disruption, City Council must learn from the mistakes and successes of the strike experience. Most importantly, City Council needs to find a way to prevent this kind of disruption to our city from occurring ever again. One way would be to request the Province of Ontario to deem "essential" the services most integral to the operation of the City, such as Emergency Medical Services (EMS). This would require a simple change in Ontario's labour-relations legislation.

The all too recent strike action has upset summer plans for everyone, especially families who rely on city-run daycares and day programs; even the water was off in the children's splashpads in the parks. Families have had to find a private solution to the failure of their basic public service; many are still waiting for refunds for the cancelled programs that were to start a week after the strike action started. Life only happens once and a labour disruption should not be able to negatively affect so many who have no say in the labour negotiations.

Residents had to deal with their garbage before the rats got it and some tenants had to deal with rats in garbage heaps behind their apartments. Businesses lost business and the construction industry was halted due to the lack of City-issued work-permits. Public health was compromised by the lack of personnel in terms of everyday response to everyday health

problems, the impossible task of monitoring the toxicity of the temporary neighbourhood dumpsites, as well Toronto's long-term health is now jeopardized by a lack of preparedness for the coming "Swine Flu" H1N1 virus pandemic. Emergency Medical Services' ambulance service was even reduced by workers involved with this strike; when ambulance response times drop by 20% people die, and sadly, they did.

Never again can City Council allow this to happen to Toronto. There is too much at stake. We must speak up and ask the Province to make integral City-services essential under Ontario's labour legislation so failed contract settlement negotiations never impact Torontonians this way again.

(Submitted to City Council on August 5, 2009 as MM38.11)