

Childcare services could be suspended if inside workers' strike takes place ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Childcare services could be suspended before March break if a deal can't be reached between the City of Toronto and the union representing the city's inside workers.

The city released their contingency plan for service delivery if the impending strike set to happen on March 14.

CUPE Local 79, represents 24,000 inside workers works in various city divisions, including homeless shelters, public health, inspectors, transportation, childcare centres, employment and social services, recreation programs and long-term care homes.

The main bargaining points for the union is job security, wages, benefits and parental leave.

According to the city, if the strike happens, families will be impacted the most.

All city-operated early learning and childcare centres will be closed, as well as programs for March Break camps and event permits at all city recreations centres, pools, fitness centres, ski hills and some arenas and outdoor ice rinks.

The city ensures that Toronto Public Health services for COVID-19 will remain but all non-critical by the agency will be suspended.

The TTC and transit, long-term care services, Toronto Police and Paramedic services will not be impacted by the strike.

But the union hopes the city will come back to the bargaining table instead of focusing on contingency plans.

"The best possible contingency plan is to negotiate a fair contract," Dave Mitchell, President of Local 79 said in a statement on Monday.

"Our focus remains on doing the work necessary to conclude negotiations without a labour disruption, but time is running out," he said.

"We have four-and-a-half days left to negotiate four collective agreements that are fair to all parties and protect the vital quality public services that residents expect and depend on. That goal remains possible, but becomes much more difficult when the City fails to put its attention where it needs to be."

Mitchell added that the contingency plan will not help families who need services during March Break and urged the city to "get serious" about bargaining a fair contract so they can get back to the "important work" residents expect.

The inside workers have been bargaining with the city since December 2019 and requested a no-board report on February 21 after meeting with a conciliation officer provided by the province. This means that even with the assistance of the officer, who is meant to improve negotiations, was not able to bring the two parties together to agree on a better contract for the workers.

Another strike almost happened in February, with CUPE Local 416 which represented outside workers, but a deal was reached just in time.

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