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## 2 councillors push to make municipal services 'essential'

August 06, 2009

**EMILY MATHIEU**  
STAFF REPORTER

As the city continues to recover from the municipal strike, two Toronto councillors are calling on the province to prevent workers from walking off the job in the future.

Councillor Michael Walker (Ward 22, St. Paul's) is proposing that city council ask the province to deem Emergency Medical Services, garbage pickup, children's services and daycare as essential services. Notices of motion coming forward today have been seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson (Ward 37, Scarborough).

"In a city of this size there becomes a dependency, just based on the sheer volume," said Walker, who wants all municipal services declared essential. "We can't have them turned on and off by ambitious politicians and union leaders."

Witnesses said it took paramedics 30 minutes to reach Toronto resident Jim Hearst as he lay dying of a heart attack midway through the strike, when Toronto EMS was operating, per agreement, at 75 per cent capacity.

Following Hearst's death, the Toronto Paramedic Association and the Ontario Paramedic Association asked the province to declare EMS an essential service.

If it did so, Ontario would be following Alberta, which declared EMS an essential service in 2008.

As to garbage collection, Walker said the unusually cool summer was the only reason the strike went as long as it did without "becoming a serious public health issue."

If trash pickup is not declared essential, he said, private collectors might be the best way to go.

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Deeming garbage collection an essential service is not unprecedented. Solid-waste workers are considered essential in Flint, Mich.

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