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MEDIA RELEASE

END THE STRIKE: TORONTONIANS NEED THEIR SERVICES BACK

Tuesday, July 14, 2009, TORONTO – Veteran Toronto City Councillor, Michael Walker, is calling for a special meeting of City Council to request back to work legislation from the provincial government.

This is the fourth week of strike action by over 30,000 municipal workers in Toronto. Key City services have been cancelled including garbage collection, children's daycare and day-camps, construction and property standards inspections, and permit issuance. Torontonians have paid their taxes for services they need and this disruption has become excessive.

"We've paid our taxes to receive a level of service we're not receiving. This is unacceptable in the extreme. To have a summer season foiled by the political expediency of a select few is unreasonable. We need our city back now," stated Councillor Michael Walker.

"This strike is due to the Mayor's reluctance to set expectations for the unions. He should have been working towards an amicable settlement even before their contracts lapsed in December 2008. Mismanagement at the top level has gotten us into this hole, and there isn't the will at City Hall to end this." Councillor Walker continued.

Over the past two years, the City has settled negotiations with several smaller employee unions at rates much higher than the City is offering CUPE Locals 79 and 416. Many have called on the Mayor since 2007 to restrain City spending and to settle contract negotiations more modestly than the new agreements as late as this March; the Mayor nonetheless proceeded recklessly and did not show any restraint. Only now, at a time when it's too late, is the Mayor attempting to recoup his mistakes on the back of Toronto's citizens and its 30,000 striking workers.

"When the Mayor fought against a Council-wide salary freeze, I knew we were headed toward this strike. The unions see the hypocrisy – I see it – the residents whom I represent see it. When will the Mayor see it?" Councillor Walker asked, "When this strike is over, we'll remember who was really at fault."

- 30 -

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