

This copy is for your personal non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies of Toronto Star content for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, or inquire about permissions/licensing, please go to: [www.TorontoStarReprints.com](http://www.TorontoStarReprints.com)

---

# Ford's costly police deal a 'rookie mistake,' critics say

Police contract has set a costly precedent for city essential services, say mayor's critics.

By **ROBYN DOOLITTLE** Urban Affairs Reporter

Thu., May 5, 2011

Mayor Rob Ford's "rookie mistake" of awarding the police association a 3.19 per cent salary hike could end up costing the city more than \$50 million annually, his critics charge.

"This is going to drive every single essential service contract in the city. The city has said it can afford to pay 3 per cent a year. Not only are the firefighters going to get it, but who else is going to now that they're an essential service? The TTC," said left-wing councillor Adam Vaughan.

"This will have a ripple through the largest employee groups in the city."

The TTC contract expired in March within days of the province declaring the system an essential service. Negotiations are underway, but if an agreement can't be reached, the system's newfound essential status means it would be sent to a provincial arbitrator.

That arbitrator now has an expensive precedent in the police contract to use as a comparable, said Vaughan.

For years the Toronto police force has been struggling to contain its rapidly ballooning \$905.9 million police operating budget. In total, about 90 per cent is tied up in wage and benefits. Board members, past and present, say generous collective bargaining awards from provincial arbitrators are to blame.

So far, pension issues have dominated debate at the TTC bargaining table, said chair Karen Stintz. But when negotiators do come to the salary issue, Stintz doesn't believe the police deal will have much of an impact.

“Where we’re benchmarking yourself is against other municipalities. I pay more attention to what other transit system increases are than the police.”

Vaughan and former TTC vice-chair Joe Mihevc disagree, now that the city has made the essential service argument. It’s a unique designation for a transit system.

This elevated status will likely mean those at the bargaining table will strike a balance, said Greg McGinnis, a partner in the labour group at Heenan Blaikie.

“They’ll look at both. Arbitrators look at a variety of factors and of course the other municipal deals worked out with other unions in recent times are relevant,” he said. “The police increase would likely be considered important, but the TTC is a different body and the comparators would be different.”

The proposed police contract, which has not yet been ratified, would add more than \$20 million annually to the bottom line.

If a similar award was given to the TTC’s 9,000 unionized employees, the annual financial impact would be around \$25 million.

Officials with Toronto fire were unable to estimate what a similar increase would mean for the department when asked Thursday afternoon, but the 3,000 unionized firefighters make a comparable wage to the police.

“Definitely police in the city of Toronto are our closest comparable. We have to look at other fire services in Ontario, too,” said Frank Ramagnano, secretary treasurer with the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters association.

“I’m not seeing any numbers here that are out of the range. It’s similar to deals we’ve seen with York and Peel region police.”

Peel region’s contract, which was wrapped up a few months ago, is almost identical to the recently negotiated Toronto terms.

The police association’s tentative four-year police contract will provide a 3.19 per cent hike this year, 3 per cent the next two years and a 2 per cent increase in 2014.

Toronto firefighters have been without a contract for a year and a half. Mediation is scheduled for June. Arbitration dates are set for December.

**Read more about:** [Karen Stintz](#), [Adam Vaughan](#)

---

Copyright owned or licensed by Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or distribution of this content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited and/or its licensors. To order copies of Toronto Star articles, please go to: [www.TorontoStarReprints.com](http://www.TorontoStarReprints.com)