

## Twitter imposter goes beyond parody, union officials say

CUPE moves to eliminate personal attacks against city strikers online

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It's a provocative Twitter post, even for a union local that shut down curbside garbage collection across Toronto.

"Helping to ruin YOUR child's summer by expanding designated dumps to neighbourhood playgrounds," said the tweet, posted yesterday by "local416," whose [Twitter page](#) links to the [official site](#) of the Canadian Union of Public Employees local representing 6,200 striking outdoor municipal workers.

Inflammatory? You bet. Real? Not a chance.

CUPE has filed complaints with Twitter and Facebook, and the union scrambled over the weekend to get online comments removed from a local newspaper's website, as the digital front widens in the war of words between the union and Toronto residents fed up with the nine-day-old strike.

The protest, which has included the posting of phone numbers of senior union members online, has gone too far, the unions say.

"A number of our committee members have received threatening phone calls," said Mark Ferguson, president of CUPE Local 416.

"It really does bother me quite deeply when the personal attacks start happening, because I'm doing this to make the world a better place, not because I'm some greedy union thug," he said.

Mr. Ferguson said he's particularly concerned about the Twitter imposter. As of yesterday, the unnamed person had posted 16 messages since the strike began June 22. One of the most recent posts urged residents to litter during Sunday's Pride parade to "show this city who is boss."

"Parody is fair game, but this is actually vexatious," said CUPE spokeswoman Pat Daley.

Twitter has had its fair share of imposters, but they usually assume the identities of celebrities. Shaquille O'Neal, Robert De Niro, Steve Buscemi, Christopher Walken and the Dalai Lama have all been impersonated on the site. CUPE has yet to receive a response from Twitter, though the company typically removes imposters upon request. The company did not respond yesterday to a request for more information.

Ms. Daley said personal phone numbers for union members also appeared on a Facebook account, and a complaint was filed.

The Twitterverse and other social media have been harnessed in less nefarious ways by Torontonians itching to have their say on the strike.

Himy Syed, 39, a Toronto-based Islamic banker and web designer, has been regularly updating his [Torontopedia.ca](#) site, personal [blog](#) and [Twitter feed](#) with all manner of strike news, from photos of a "[Parks are not Dumps](#)" protest at Christie Pits to [video](#) of a confrontation outside a temporary trash drop-off on Lakeshore Boulevard.

It's a far cry from Toronto's 2002 garbage strike, when Mr. Syed said he was a lone voice in the online wilderness. "I was doing all this stuff back then on Blogspot and my other website, but I was just ahead of the game. Nobody cared."

Ryan Taylor, 32, owner of Fair Trade Jewellery Co., used [Twitter](#) and his [blog](#) to get the word out over the weekend that he would collect garbage from Toronto residents in exchange for donations to War Child Canada.

He raised \$140 for the charity in just a few hours Saturday. Mr. Taylor plans another pickup midweek and has posted downloadable posters at [trashman.ftjco.com](#). "We're just leveraging the power of neighbourhoods and the power of online," he said.