

Garbage strike doesn't stink for everyone

For enterprising Torontonians, one man's trash is another man's profit



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Bill Hennessey sees gold in them hills of trash.

The 25-year-old live lobster salesman-turned-event promoter has whipped up a website and organized disposal trucks in a mad dash to capitalize on Toronto's garbage strike.

His instant business, Toronto Sameday Garbage Removal, launched Tuesday with Mr. Hennessey, his brother and a cube van going door-to-door in North Toronto, offering to pick up bags of trash.

The self-described "garbaneurs" see no limit to the gains they can make off Toronto's pain. Mr. Hennessey said he has proper disposal trucks lined up for the weekend, and a deal to dump the waste at a landfill outside the city (he wouldn't say where).

As for what he'll charge, he's coy. Mr. Hennessey said he'll "figure it out as we go based on market demand," though he is aiming for about \$50 per home in the beginning.

"We'll come to your door. We'll take everything the City of Toronto would typically take," he said. "Who wants a stinky garage? As you know if you've been to a transfer station, it's a hassle."

Indeed, Mr. Hennessey stands to make a small fortune if yesterday's experience at some transfer stations continues. In Scarborough, residents waited several hours under the blazing sun to cross the picket line. A manager working as a bylaw officer shooed away cars that parked too close to the gates, and threatened other residents with fines for illegal dumping.

"If this persists for three or four more weeks, it's going to be a nightmare. People are going to be dumping," said a woman in line with two bags. She declined to give her name. "Who can afford to stand here and wait three hours?"

Toronto's last garbage strike in 2002 was a boon to private trash haulers. Many charged premium prices, although some, like 1-800-GOT-JUNK, turned down work out of respect for striking workers.

For someone new to the rubbish business, Mr. Hennessey cuts a polished figure: His hair is coiffed, his sunglasses mirrored, and the sales patter spills easily off his tongue.

The Charlottetown native and business graduate from the University of Western Ontario runs a live lobster delivery service that ships crustaceans summer-long to Muskoka. But he saw a new opportunity while sifting through Monday's newspaper headlines after Toronto's 24,000 indoor and outdoor workers walked off the job, shutting down daycares, recreation centres and garbage collection.

"I saw the garbage strike and said that's going to be an issue for all families ... I'm sure there's demand for this service."

For more on Mr. Hennessey's business, visit www.strikegarbage.com.