

How to survive the Great Strike of '09

Nowhere to dump your trash? Feel like a swim? Our fearless reporter offers ways to beat the strike.

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Try “borrowing” some books

Though five libraries shut down and others shortened their hours, you need not fear. Head down to The World's Biggest Bookstore at Yonge and Edward, and borrow books to your heart's content. This is what I did on Tuesday afternoon when I purchased a copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The cashier told me about the returns policy – a full refund within 14 days, as long as you don't treat the book like a football. Some people do take advantage, he explained, but there's little that they can do to stop it. I advised him that the policy was stupid and some shady individual might take advantage of it. When I opened the book I was shocked – shocked, I say – to discover that *Ulysses* was in fact not a biography of Ulysses S. Grant, Civil War general and President. Later that day, after reading a few pages of incomprehensible nonsense about Dublin, I returned the book to the Indigo at Bay and Bloor (Indigo owns WBB) and told the cashier that I just didn't want it. “Is it the quality?” he asked.

“Join” a Gym

For years I was a member of GoodLife Fitness, but I cancelled my membership a few weeks ago. Working out isn't exactly my cup of tea, but the club offers a sweetheart of a deal for prospective members: a trial week during which you can visit three times and essentially run amok over the facilities. As a recently disavowed member of the club, I dispatched my friend Sam to the Manulife Centre location, which happens to have a pool. He sat down with a representative who gave him the hard sell. “I almost went for it,” Sam told me, before he came to his senses and remembered that he was merely there as a spy.

Pay the Pirates

When it's operable, the Toronto Island ferry takes passengers to Centre Island, Hanlan's Point and Ward's Island for \$6.50 return (\$3.00 for those under fourteen). Since ferries are out of service for the duration of the strike, there is really only one practical alternative. The private water-taxi service at the York Street dock is, as far as I could tell, three private boats that head out to Centre Island or Hanlan's Point whenever there are enough people lined up to warrant a trip. It costs \$10 to get to Centre Island – for adults and children. I asked the driver if he would take me to Ward's Island instead. “Thirty dollars.” I demurred, and I headed out to Centre with some tourists. I walked around the deserted wasteland for half an hour, realizing that I finally perform my nude *Dance of Dying Swan* without fear of arrest. I waited for a second taxi. Heading back alone with a different driver, I asked how the strike was affecting business. “It's unreal for a weekday,” he said. “Hopefully, it'll go for as long as when Mel Lastman was mayor. That one was 16 days,” he said.

Take Your Children to the Perfect Place – and gamble

While traipsing around the ghost land that was Centre Island, I came across Centreville. The city's sunniest amusement park is closed as a result of the strike, but thankfully there are several alternatives for young children and drugged-out teenagers. Fantasy Fair is located at Rexdale Boulevard and Highway 27 in the Woodbine Centre. It is advertised on its website as “The Perfect Place for the Whole Family,” which is surely no exaggeration but a carefully considered scientific fact. The indoor park has

bumper cars and boats, a train and an arcade. It doesn't require a ferry to get there, and if you're bored stiff, just ditch the kids and head across the road and lay down some bets at Woodbine Racetrack. A second alternative is Ontario Place, at Strachan Avenue and Lake Shore. The rides are family friendly, there's a water park and a number of indoor attractions, such as 2009's new Wild World of Weather (which threatens to actually "blow you away"). Of course it is more expensive than both Fantasy Fair and Centreville, but it does come with the added bonus of actually being fun.

Hire a Good White Van

Before the city announced that Christie Pits, my neighborhood park, was suddenly one of 19 newly legit dumping sites, I was in a real bind with my heap of garbage. My extremely helpful friends suggested driving out to Barrie with my windows open, building some backyard bonfires and storing my compost in the freezer, but there are some real solutions for those of you who either care about me and don't want to stink up my neighbourhood – or even those few who don't care about me. The most obvious is private pickup. While walking home on Tuesday I picked up a flyer that promised that, for \$5 per bag, Tom Richards and His Good White Van would pick up my garbage. I called the next day and he arrived on Thursday morning (as promised, between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.) in his white van to take the bags to a drop-off station. Soon-ish. Inexplicably, he told me he won't deliver the drop-offs to a dump until Monday: "What'm I gonna do with these till then?" he mused.

Raise a glass to the LCBO

The only good news we saw on the labour front in Toronto, and in fact in all of Ontario, was the last-minute resolution reached by the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and its staff. It was a good thing too; the notion of a padlocked liquor store, on top of the pandemonium already engulfing our city, would have been God/Buddha/Xenu's ultimate joke. After all, the only thing that can possibly distract a person from this stink bomb of a city is a smooth scotch on the rocks, followed by another scotch on the rocks, followed by