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News | Columnists / Joe Warmington

## **Time for some ingenuity**

Last Updated: 23rd June 2009, 4:16am

Do we really need a person to administer cat licences? It's amazing how much power and control our city has given these unions.

Just check out what happened yesterday on Day 1 of the CUPE inside and outside workers strike.

The annual Pride Parade flag raising at Nathan Phillips Square was cancelled. Raising a flag up a pole in Toronto, it seems, is considered highly skilled, unionized work.

Or were some people afraid to cross the picket line, which was the real reason for the cancellation?

It was hard to get a straight answer out of City Hall, where many councillors' offices were not open to handle constituent calls. They probably won't be returning their pay, though.

Meanwhile, the stupidity of not putting up the flag didn't stop organizers, who adjusted and simply raised it at the non-union 519 Church St. office instead.

Turns out they could live without that so-called service.

You might see more of this kind of creativity -- as people remind this out-of-touch administration who actually is in charge!

You are -- albeit, with the lunacy of this week, you'd never know it.

Consider the insanity and nastiness of this. If you have a wedding planned this week and were hoping for pictures with a city park as a backdrop, your permit is now cancelled.

And if you want to go swimming, play tennis, softball or golf, forget it. If your children are enrolled in a city daycare program, tough luck.

But people will survive. And maybe will start asking whether we really need any of these taxpayer-funded services?

If anything comes out of this strike, perhaps it'll be that the pampered public sector employee, as well as those weak elected politicians who supervise them, will be reminded they're here for us and not us here for them.

Of course, many still say stopping garbage collection gives the union the hammer. Don't be so sure.

Perhaps those putting the boots to the taxpayer misread the temperature in the real world, where people don't have jobs for life, guaranteed pensions, more than 500 bankable sick days over a career, regular wage increases and 8 a.m.-3 p.m. jobs.

It takes a lot of nerve during a worldwide recession for anybody to play hardball on collecting sick-day benefits or demanding hefty increases.

Yes, there are many hard-working union members, but Councillor Doug Holyday thinks the public is fed up with the rest of them.

"It's like they (unions) are not living in the real world."

'SICK PAY ISSUE'

Meanwhile, Etobicoke is still enjoying garbage and recycling services because of private contracts agreed to prior to amalgamation.

"We dealt with this sick pay issue 13 years ago," says Holyday, who was Etobicoke's mayor. "And by contracting out the garbage collection we saved more than \$1 million a year."

Common sense. Could it come to Toronto? Holyday says there are areas to trim.

In Windsor, a similar strike hasn't resulted in a crumbling city, says resident Ian Phillips.

"People here have been diligently taking care of their own trash" to a city-run free public transfer station and everything else is "business as usual" with "grassroots groups" looking after the parks and businesses "stealthily trucking away the downtown core's garbage."

Windsor seems to be getting by. How about Toronto?

We can certainly clean up our own parks, find volunteers to supervise kids while they swim, or play softball or tennis without the permission of any union and let people take their wedding pictures for free.

Whose side am I on in this labour dispute? The taxpayers!

Run that message up the city's flag pole -- with or without a unionized worker supervising.

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