

STRIKING AT 16

Time to grow up and fix strike mess

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[Tamie Dolny](#)

Life certainly can be unfair.

However, that doesn't mean it's time to give up.

Maybe I'm young, maybe I'm inexperienced, maybe I'm a bit too raw ... but I still believe that if you've got enough guts, enough cheek, enough nerve, you can change the world.

That is the thought that kept me going as I walked in a circle for four hours yesterday morning as a member of CUPE Local 79.

Hope.

I had been awake since 5 a.m., when my father, a manager for the City of Toronto, headed out for another 12-hour shift.

By 6 a.m., I'd managed to drag myself out of bed and into the bathroom, where I sat on the floor and promptly fell back asleep for another 15 minutes.

Most of my friends were still sleeping, snug in their beds, and by the time I finished my shift, they were probably still snug in their beds. Not that I was bitter. I would have had to get up at 6 for my summer job as a lifeguard instructor.

Once awake again, and panicking about the time, I quickly cleaned up, darted downstairs, threw some Frosted Mini-Wheats into a bowl and wolfed them down, turning on the TV and praying for positive news about the strike.

As usual, there was none, so my mother drove me to the York Civic Centre. There I was greeted by the sleep-deprived and coffee-addicted members of my picket line.

It was cloudy when I arrived at 7 a.m., and the mood was grim. I, too, helped myself to coffee from a container in a union member's van. It was lukewarm but comforting.

There seems to be a common misconception that members of CUPE Locals 79 and 416 are happy to be on strike. We voted for one, didn't we?

Well, sure, we voted for a strike after six months of bargaining with the city (if "bargaining" refers to the city refusing to back off from its demand for concessions).

But nobody expected the city to be this stubborn. It's like two children fighting over one toy truck.

It may be difficult for people who've never been on strike to understand, but nobody willingly enters a strike



RICHARD LAUTENS/TORONTO STAR

Tamie Dolny, outside her Old Mill home, is on strike with CUPE instead of working as a lifeguard. Her father works as a manager for the City of Toronto. (July 14, 2009)

without exhausting all other options.

If all parties could just sit down and hammer out a contract, if both the union and the city could be more reasonable, this strike could end in a compromise.

Otherwise, the garbage will just keep piling up. It's about time everyone started acting like the adults they are instead of sticking up their noses and wagging their tongues at each other.

We all want the same thing: We want the city to get back to normal, with no temporary dumpsites, workers back at their jobs, and parks and other city facilities open. Then I'll get my job back, and you'll get your city back.

Deal?

Tamie Dolny's original story for the Star, about being a teen picket, generated such response that she has been hired to write a regular column for the duration of the city workers' strike.