

CITY WALKOUT: DAY 24

## Trash services duck provincial approval

The piles are high but the skyline is safe. It's just a question of keeping it all in perspective

Jul 15, 2009 04:30 AM

Kenyon Wallace  
STAFF REPORTER

Ari Ditkofsky knows a good business opportunity when he sees one.

The 26-year-old entrepreneur started his own garbage collection service the day after Toronto's civic workers went on strike.

What he didn't know was that accepting cash for trash without provincial approval is illegal.

"We got really big and were doing really well," said Ditkofsky, who netted \$10,000 in just 10 days of hauling residential trash.

"When I found out it was illegal, which we didn't know from the get-go, I figured it wasn't worth it. I thought, let's take our winnings and leave a winner."

Ditkofsky is off to Europe to enjoy the rest of his summer.

While the strike might appear to be a godsend for small business people like Ditkofsky looking to make a quick buck, commercial garbage collectors operating without a certificate of approval from the provincial environment ministry are actually breaking the law.

"They need the certificate of approval from us to demonstrate that they can properly manage the waste in an environmentally responsible way and that they're taking it to an approved site," said ministry spokeswoman Kate Jordan.

Those who continue collecting trash without paying for the \$500 certificate could receive a provincial order to comply and risk a fine depending on how much garbage was hauled, whether it was hazardous and where it was dumped.

If waste hauled by someone without provincial approval damages the environment after being dumped, fines could range from \$5,000 to \$4 million per day.

Nobody has been fined since the strike began, but Jordan said the ministry has received tips from residents concerned about the legitimacy of some local garbage collection operations. She said at least four companies have said they will apply for a certificate after being contacted by the ministry.



ADRIEN VECZAN/TORONTO STAR

*Ari Ditkofsky, left, with his partner, Jon Neeman, started their own garbage collection company until they learned a permit was needed. During about 10 days of operation Ditkofsky grossed enough money to send himself to Europe for the rest of the summer.*

Community activist Ryan Taylor says he was forced to shut down his garbage collection service even though all the proceeds were going to War Child Canada, a charity providing humanitarian assistance to war-affected children.

Taylor said he contacted the environment ministry to ask about the legality of his operation and was told the ministry's authority under the Environmental Protection Act did not include charity fundraising. When he phoned the ministry for clarification, Taylor said he was told he had to pay \$500 for a certificate.

"I can't really justify that cost as I'm collecting for a charity," said Taylor, 32, who raised \$2,000 in a week. "It comes across as little more than a cash grab. I think it's more protectionism from the waste disposal industry."

But Steve Till, owner of Junkaroo, which services Toronto and Hamilton, says the certificates exist for a reason.

"A lot of guys will be using their pickup trucks and trailers and they won't be properly tarped. They'll be going down the highway and they might lose something or they may not dump the garbage at a proper facility," said Till, who has a certificate.

He also pays \$10,000 a year to insure one of his company trucks and is registered to operate a commercial vehicle.

"It's frustrating because it was a lot of work to get all the licensing and proper vehicle insurance but there are people operating without any of these."