

Until ratification do us part

Jul 28, 2009 04:30 AM

[Comments on this story](#) (7)

[Vinay Menon](#)

TO: CUPE Local 416 president Mark Ferguson

RE: Requesting Your Bargaining Services In My Household

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

Now that Toronto's municipal strike appears to be over, let me begin with a "Congratulations."

On Day 36, how was the impasse solved? When will workers return to work? And if the city did pull the "last concession off the table," as you suggested, wasn't Day 1 to Day 35 entirely unnecessary?

I know. You can't get into specifics until the temporary agreements are ratified later this week. Fine. But if I was to draw a conclusion based strictly on the body language of you and Mayor David Miller at the separate news conferences yesterday, it seems like the unions "won."

You talked and grinned like a Cheshire cat. The mayor talked and looked like an invisible tiger was mauling his shins.

All of this got me to thinking.

Sir, you are clearly wasted in labour relations. Have you ever considered domestic relations? Have you considered bringing your bargaining prowess to the kitchen table to get a fairer shake for Toronto's boyfriends and husbands?

Lately, I've been having some trouble with my employer (my wife). She is demanding rollbacks and concessions on hard-won benefits – TV time, pub night, bankable No-Chore Days, martini overtime – and is talking tough, just like the city did up until yesterday.

My employer recently expressed frustration with the sluggish pace of the Basement Reorganization Project.

Then my employer wanted a status update on Operation Burn a Bunch of Nursery Rhymes Onto DVD.

Then my employer called me "Honey," asked about my day, but totally cut me off to talk about her day, creating a hostile work environment.

I recently attempted to organize a union drive among male friends. We met at an undisclosed location where the subject was broached over pints and wings and complaints.

"Gentlemen," I said. "Our rights are being trampled. But there is strength in numbers and it is time for us to pursue a collective agreement. What do we want? How are we going to get it?"

With that, I handed out buttons – "There Is a `Me' in `Men'" – and opened the floor.

"Since the kids arrived," said one guy, "my spending budget has been slashed by 95 per cent. I had my eyes on titanium golf clubs but my employer unilaterally diverted those funds into an RESP."

We shook our heads with disbelief.

"I slept on the couch last night," said another, his voice cracking.

"I objected to my employer's plan to move into a new house to get into a better school district. Apparently, this means I don't care if my son ends up in the Don Jail 20 years from now."

We winced and ordered a round of tequila.

"My employer called in someone to fix the toilet because she didn't trust me," said one poor bastard, standing and looking anguished. "A scab plumber? Will my bedroom duties be outsourced next?"

And so it went, grievance after grievance. Our employers insist change is needed in these troubled times. But we're the ones expected to do all the changing.

This is where you enter the picture.

We need a leader. We need someone who has resolve, someone who can issue an effective ultimatum, someone who can make our employers cave.

As we learned yesterday, it takes two to tango but only one to capitulate.

And we, the Toronto Chapter of Husbands and Boyfriends Local 416-905, are done dancing, especially when there's a buying freeze on surround sound stereos.

Tell us how to proceed. We are ready to strike.

vmemon@thestar.ca