

9:50**The Windsor Star:** Thanks for joining us. We'll be with you shortly.

10:04 **The Windsor Star:** The municipal strike has entered its ninth week and many of you have called us with questions. So, this morning we've made Star municipal affairs reporter Doug Schmidt, who has been covering the strike from the beginning, available to answer some of your questions.

10:05**The Windsor Star:** Star columnist Chris Vander Doelen is also here to add his insights.

10:07**The Windsor Star:** Earlier today, Matthew Ford asked by e-mail how is it that CUPE is allowed to hold people for five minutes each.

10:07[Comment From orpheus]
I look forward to seeing what is discussed. Thank you for letting me join.

10:09**Doug Schmidt:** A court injunction allows CUPE pickets to delay people or vehicles at city worksites up to five minutes. This has caused long delays at the public waste dropoff facilities.

10:10[Comment From razor]
never mind about holding up people for 5 min, what about not allowing people to leave for 3 hrs, isn't this against the law?

10:11**Doug Schmidt:** Matt also asked if it's only a car or a person that can be held up. It's both. Those walking into city hall, for example, are also being made to wait.

10:12[Comment From Dan]
Is the strike going to be at red bull Saturday?

10:13[Comment From Tonyc]
In the city's and country's current economic situation, why will CUPE not accept what must be done as the CAW and UAW with regards to their pensions and benefits? All new and future hires for their members, the union leader there has accepted it for the survival of their industries and their retired members. The difference being the CAW and UAW serve private sectors while the public service unions serve the public and think that the taxpayers have a bottomless pocket when it comes to money.

10:13[Comment From Dan]
How does Mayor seem to know which way the mediator will lean towards? Isn't it supposed to be agreed on by both parties on who mediator will be? I couldn't see anyone agreeing to a impartial mediator, kinda makes you wonder how legal system actually uses this outlet if it truly isn't impartial?

10:14[Comment From Richard]
If the union is so concerned about future retiree benefits why don't they use the money they are currently wasting on ads to fund them?

10:14**Doug Schmidt:** A reader asked if the strikers will target the Red Bull Air Race. CUPE Local 543 president Jean Fox and CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan have both said Red Bull will not be targeted. That doesn't mean there won't be any pickets in the streets over the weekend.

10:14[Comment From eddie groger]
the fire hydrants are being overgrown by the grass this could result in a lengthy delay if the firemen need to use the blueprint, meanwhile someone could burn to death. Will cupe allow the cutting of grass around the hydrants only for public safety

10:14[Comment From Ray]
what is the main issue?

10:15[Comment From Aimee]
Don't the unions feel that by angering the residents of Windsor that it will backfire for them? They want people to complain to the mayor and get them back to work, however, most people I know are getting angry with the striking city workers and are now backing the mayor even more. I understand they are getting desperate, however, it is difficult to sympathize with these people with them acting this way and asking for these demands during these difficult economic times.

10:15[Comment From Bob]
What is going to be done about businesses and residential buildings who refuse to clear garbage away from the roadside? Wyndotte Street (Chinese restaurant area) is becoming a health hazard! Something needs to be done now....

10:16**Doug Schmidt:** Ray asks what the main issue is. There are two, post-retirement benefits for new hires and wages. CUPE national president Paul Moist on a recent visit to Windsor said wages are not a big hurdle.

10:16[Comment From Jennifer]

Why does the union not present the offer on the table to its members and let them vote on it? If they vote 'no' can they not go back to the table?

10:18**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Good question, Jennifer. But that's a question for the union. Only they can answer that.

10:18[Comment From Vera Todd]

What are the feelings on the streets of Windsor about this strike? I am CUPE member from a nearby municipality and I am concerned at the amount of bitterness expressed in this newspaper towards the strikers.

10:18**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Vera, what I've been hearing I wrote about in my column today. I rarely hear from anyone who supports the strikers.

10:19**Doug Schmidt:** Jennifer asked why the union can't present the city's offer to its membership for a vote. It could, but that's the union's prerogative and probably goes against the way contract negotiations are usually conducted. The city also has the option to go to the province and ask for such a vote. It only gets to do that once. It's risky, because if it fails, this strike turns messier than it is now.

10:20**The Windsor Star:** We're getting lots of feedback. That's great. Please be patient as we try to get to as many of our questions. Here are some more of your comments.

10:20[Comment From Dave M]

I hope that both sides come to an agreement soon. The people of this city, union and residence have suffered enough. What is the likely hood of this strike ending without an abritrator?

10:20[Comment From gary]

how can the ave citizen be heard by council? CUPE alleges certain "public opinion" , but of course, it's hardly what they offer it to be

10:20[Comment From Bob]

I agree with Matthew Ford....surely holding people against their will is some form of unlawful detention?

10:20[Comment From andre]

what ever happened to saving your OWN money for retirement like the majority of the population? why should other people support cupe when retirement comes?

10:20[Comment From Jeff]

If there's a line of people and they're holding each one for 5 minutes, you'd be there for hours, like that poor guy in the paper today! Thats' rediculous!

10:21[Comment From gary]

was does the court allow such action in favour of 1800 workers vs 200,000 taxpaying citizens ?? WHY ?

10:21[Comment From Tim]

Have the concessions the union is being asked to approve of been matched by the politicians?

10:21[Comment From Richard]

CUPE had erected lawn signs along Riverside Drive on public property. This is not legal and charities have been banned from doing the same for several years. Is anyone going to do anything about it?

10:21[Comment From Shawn]

How do they think they will get community support buy bullying people?? I have not met one person who supports CUPE.

10:21[Comment From Pat B]

I would like to see the City, which represents the taxpayer, privatize any service that so gravely affects us. This could happen again to the citizens of Windsor. Can the City do this?

10:22[Comment From Jo]

I would be interested to know if Mayor Francis and the city councillors have offered to give up

any of their benefits?

10:22[Comment From D]

what about not allowing people to leave for 3 hrs, isn't this against the law? what the heck do you mean by that?

10:22**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Gary, no courts have been involved. But given the record of our justice system, I wouldn't count on them siding with taxpayers.

10:22[Comment From Joe Taxpayer]

If the public drop-off was not on city property, would CUPE be allowed to picket there?

10:22[Comment From P. Davidson]

Cupe city employees who do not live in Windsor should not be on the picket line. If for some reason this cannot be done then O propose that these non resident employees be penalized by paying the difference in municipal taxes.

10:22[Comment From Boingo]

Why are Windsor's taxes so much larger than our next door neighbours. Do you think CUPE factor this into their bargaining or does the tax payer not feature in their thinking.

10:22[Comment From Richard]

Everyone would like post retirement benefits but until most of the taxpayers have them why should people we pay have better benefits than we do?

10:23[Comment From jj]

why such laws in favour of the "few" and not the majority ?

10:23[Comment From Jennifer]

Who is running the PR on this strike they seem to constantly miss the blatantly obvious and continue to upset the people whom they are trying seek support from.

10:23**Chris Vander Doelen:** The three hour wait is an outrageous abuse of the law, in my opinion. I don't think Windsor Police should be allowed to shirk their duties by permitting CUPE to get away with taking people hostage that way.

10:23[Comment From Tim]

I remember being held up during a Bell strike. It was longer than 5 minutes and it was in the middle of winter.'

10:23**Doug Schmidt:** Andre asks why "other people" should pay for CUPE workers' retirement benefits. These benefits were negotiated as part of past contract dealings ... perhaps in order to wrestle those gains from the employer, the workers may have given in to other demands or concessions. Each set of contract negotiations is different depending on the priorities of those doing the bargaining.

10:23[Comment From Joe Taxpayer]

How do they "make" you wait when you're walking - can you simply not walk around them? Is it like "Red Rover" where they all hold hands?

10:23[Comment From Bill]

Do you think the city should get out of the garbage collection business, and put the contract out to tender as is done in outlying areas.

10:23[Comment From Marj Bondy]

Why would the mayor and the people of Windsor want to give in to the cupe people who are behaving like a bunch of bullies.

10:23[Comment From concerned]

I saw the lineup this morning. Noone was talking to the person in the car, the strikers were just pacing back and forth in front of the cars not letting them out. How does this get public support?

10:24[Comment From orpheus]

what can CUPE really do? Can they physically hold you back? Hit you? If I am going into city hall, and someone talks to me, and I ignore them, are they allowed to put their hands on me? seriously?

10:24[Comment From Chris]

Why hasn't CUPE had Gignac, Brister and Jones reclare a conflict of interest? I know Jones is on CUPES side but all Gignac and Jones use post retirements benefits and Brister's mom has them??

10:24**Chris Vander Doelen:** Bill, I think the city should look into outsourcing, too. But the mayor has already said publicly it wouldn't save money. I don't see any point of outsourcing if it doesn't save money.

10:25[Comment From summer]

5 min/per person or car - 12 people in line makes that 1 hr wait... 24 people, 2 hr wait... this is a big city and this is not fair... not to mention not being able to LEAVE for that amount of time or more... it's called HOSTAGE TAKING and it is not an acceptable action!!

10:26[Comment From T]

If they hold up a car at the front of the line, do they hold the second car in line for 5 min. as well? That's 10 min., 15 for the next and so on until you get up to 3hrs. Sounds illegal to me.

10:26**Doug Schmidt:** Chris asks why councillors Gignac, Brister and Jones don't declare a conflict of interest due to city benefits their families receive. Good question and one that others have asked. I'll be looking into it.

10:26**Chris Vander Doelen:** Maybe all the public sector councillors should declare a conflict. But that would knock most of them out of the debate. Marra is a parole officer, Hatfield is a former public broadcaster.

10:27[Comment From Chris]

WHY is the Mayor allowed to be so involved in negotiations. What about his committee that he is paying? Never has a mayor been so involved and look how far it's gotten everyone?

10:27[Comment From Boingo]

Why are CUPE bringing in outside supporters at the week-end. What are they going to do - if not picket.

10:27[Comment From Chris]

HANG IN THERE JIM AND JEAN!! WE ARE ON YOUR SIDE!!

10:27[Comment From concerned]

With 19 busloads of people coming into Windsor from all over and CUPE members claiming poverty needing to use foodbanks who is paying for the incoming people's accommodations?

10:27**Doug Schmidt:** T asks if a car is held up for 5 minutes can the next car be similarly delayed at a picket line. Yes. People walking as well.

10:27**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Who would imagine that the mayor can't be involved? He's chairman of the board, for Petes sake. This is a line of argument put forward by CUPE, which is disappointed in how the public has rallied to the mayor's side.

10:27[Comment From Marj Bondy]

Mr. Mayor take a look at what President Regan did to end the

10:28[Comment From Laurie Barkhouse]

Cupe has put for the motion that the Union and City start a co pay for the post retirement benefits of its future retirees and Eddie said no

10:28[Comment From john]

they are not asking for any demands they are just asking to keep what they have

10:29**Chris Vander Doelen:**

The only reason the mayor has been at the negotiating table is that the mediator has summoned him there. What's he supposed to do, refuse to show?

10:30[Comment From Ray]

The main issue of benefits and the reason this is not good for the current union is workers believe eventually the new hires could vote out their benefits when they outnumber the current membership. Couldn't something be put in the contract to ensure this does not happen?

10:31**Doug Schmidt:** Chris asks why the mayor appears so involved in negotiations and not simply relying on the city's negotiating team. Good question. The mayor is the city's face in this strike, which is why the public doesn't hear from councillors too much. At the end of the day, any tentative deal reached between the two negotiating teams must be ratified by council which is why it meets behind closed doors regularly to be advised on each twist and turn.

10:31**Chris Vander Doelen:** John; yeah, but what they have (lifetime benefits) is something an economically suffering city can no longer afford. The cost of those benefits has zoned 67 per

cent in the last few years, while thousands of the city's best jobs are disappearing. T

10:32[Comment From Jeff]

Why is Post Retirement benefits for new hires so important? I'm sorry but I don't believe these people are so noble that they'll take a \$200 paycheck and strike for 9 weeks over something that ultimately doesn't affect them

10:32[Comment From Gary]

Has there been any meetings of the membership to see where they stand on the issues?

10:32[Comment From Joe]

Are the city of Windsor workers being used to set a "standard" for negotiations in other parts of the province?

10:32[Comment From Doug]

What's this \$2,000 payment they want?

10:34[Comment From jamie]

I heard today that city councillors are eligible for retirement benefits, is that True? I find it hard to believe this considering the stance they've taken

10:34[Comment From Chris]

WINDSOR STAR is against the STRIKERS. I guess it helps that the MAYOR has ties to the Windsor Star. YOU people are suppose to REPORT the facts. NOT EDDIE's version of these facts!

10:36**Doug Schmidt:** Ray brings up a good point. Yes, it could be put in writing that existing employees maintain post-retirement benefits if, as the city demands, new hires no longer get those benefits. But that will likely never happen because the union has been firm in rejecting any contract concession that would create a two-tier system among workers. And would future workers, who will eventually form a majority, really be willing to fight for the rights of those in a minority who have benefits they don't share?

10:36[Comment From Allison]

I have a developmentally disabled daughter who needs a new health card so I need to go to city hall to the Health Office. She needs to be with me to have her photo taken - my concern is will the CUPE workers hold us up?? She will literally have a panic attack if that happens. She needs her card for other health issues. I'm so scared that these CUPE workers will upset her

10:36[Comment From ic]

the problem is the sequential delay method - a 3 hr delay is only 36 cars @5 min per vehicle. At the waste drop off areas, CUPE should only be allowed to delay 5 min per group of vehicles. i.e. the first one at the exit is delayed 5 mins and at the end of that time, that car and the next 10-15 are allowed to leave.

10:37[Comment From George]

I support the strikers (I am not a member of CUPE) and I am saddened by the present atmosphere of "clawing our way to the bottom" as fast as we can...

10:37[Comment From Dwayne]

You rarely hear from supporters because everyone is either laid off or on the brink and a good city job would be a god send.

10:37[Comment From Guest]

The workers chose to strike. Yet everytime someone wants to clean up an alleyway, park, street, etc. the union keeps saying it's their job. So, they should do "their job." If not, the citizens should be allowed to do "their job" if they won't.

10:37[Comment From Jo-Anne]

I find it crazy that the union says wages are not an issue. Did we not learn from Chrysler and GM negotiations that wage cost include far more than just peoples pay cheques.

10:37**Doug Schmidt:** Doug asks what about "this \$2,000 payment" the union wants? The city has offered a cash payment in lieu of any wage increase. The union doesn't like it because only wage hikes carry over into future years.

10:39**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Jo-Anne, "employment costs" are what economists call it. You have to add the wages, pensions, benefits, sick time to come up with total costs to taxpayers.

10:39[Comment From Jeff]

Why wasn't there a work to rule on this issue?

10:39[Comment From George]

This strike will end sooner or later, one way or another. How does the Mayor plan to "lead" this workforce after this?

10:40[Comment From concerned]

Why do CUPE members believe they are entitled to the same as Management? They can't have both sides of the fence. If they want to be Management apply for Management -if they want protection from a union they stay as an employee. Why do they think they deserve both ?

10:40[Comment From Guest]

to JO the mayor's benefits have nothing to do with this he is but one man the union is 1800 and their projected benefits will bankrupt this city

10:40**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Work to rule is a tactic you use before the strike, not after it's started. It's too late to go back that stage. They decided to pull the trigger on a strike instead, escalating the conflict.

10:40[Comment From Jo]

I am so tired of hearing that City workers should be living in the city. Since when did anyone have the right to tell you people where you must live. This isn't a communist country

10:41**Chris Vander Doelen:** I think the city workers should be able to live where ever they choose.

Residency rules are a form of coercion I don't like and I don't think are appropriate in a free society.

10:41[Comment From Vera Todd]

The strikers are also taxpayers of Windsor, what they are fighting for is the same benefits for new hires as was negotiated for in present contracts. I am really disappointed in what I am reading here, I am sorry that most people seem to be focusing on the immediate , not on the future.

10:41[Comment From Chris]

Give them their post retirement benefits, but only allow city workers to live inside city limits.

Why should we pay taxes to support someone living/paying taxes in another city/town?

10:41[Comment From Maria]

In my opinion...these people are fighting for something that doesn't even effect them. With our economical struggle today, these people should be happy they have and can get a job.

Democracy is all good and dandy, but sometimes when it comes to unions, someone needs to put their foot down and say enough is enough, either go back to work or loose your job. Would this be an option supported by the provincial government?

10:41[Comment From pp]

While i support the CUPE workers, This thing has gone WAY too far when they start bullying people and businesses. NOBODY likes bullies. Especially bullies that are paid by my tax dollars.

10:42[Comment From Jo-Anne]

I like Bill's idea of contracting out services like garbage pick up

10:42**Chris Vander Doelen:** People are focussing on their future tax obligations, which have been skyrocketing. I don't understand why the strikers think their lives and paycheques outrank those of taxpayers' in importance.

10:42[Comment From Tom]

If this ever ends i hope everyone holds them accountable to all the jobs they claim they do.

10:42[Comment From Jo-Anne]

BTW. thank you Windsor Star for this forum!

10:42[Comment From Don]

outsourcing may not save any money ... but at least they cant go on strik

10:43**Chris Vander Doelen:**

Jo-Anne: I think we're starting to get the hang of this.

10:43[Comment From td]

Outsourcing might not save money but it would definitely guarantee this critical service

10:43[Comment From Laurie Barkhouse]

Nice to see that your commentators are so unbiased on the issue

10:43[Comment From Tonyc]

If having post retirement benefits beyond 65 is the main sticking point, how about either no wage increases and have the additional wages otherwise put into this pension?

10:44[Comment From Tim]

Well, if it doesn't save money to outsource it, I guess the CUPE workers are making the going rate. So maybe people should question why they are upset. Or is there some other factor that I'm missing?

10:44[Comment From Andrew]

With a 13% unemployment rate in this city, CUPE appears to be rubbing everyone's noses in it with this ill timed strike. I'm certain the city made their move against the post employment benefits with this in mind but CUPE should, at the very least, offer to take more of a pay cut to help subsidize these benefits they want to keep so badly for new hires.

10:45**Chris Vander Doelen**: Bias is being characterized these days as having an opinion. I am proud of having made up my own mind on the issues of the day. People who take their thinking orders from others are sheep.

10:45[Comment From Marv]

How many cities have las requiring city employees to live in that city? Doesn't Deroit have it?

10:45[Comment From George]

the point of the disruption is to "call your councillor" and demand that they go back and bargain in good faith (not take it out on the worker!)

10:45[Comment From Bill]

The mayor said publicly outsourcing wouldn't save any money BUT !!!!!!! has he considered it would prevent in future strikes and stoppages of garbage collections since the city no longer owns or manages the business ? Putting out to tender might be the way to go, and bargain for the winning company to pick up the city workers as part of the original package.

10:45[Comment From PBP]

The City may not save any money by outsourcing but I'll bet our city would look better. For several years now, I have noticed that money is spent on tress, shrubs, plants and the following year these areas are filled with weeds. So many areas are very unsightly and I wonder why don't these people know the difference between a shrub and a 2' weed.

10:46[Comment From Terry]

why couldn't council send ballots to all citizens of Windsor asking if they support leaving the pension benifits the way they are. They would vote knowing that it would increase their taxes BUT it would be their choice.

10:46[Comment From Tom]

I don't think some of those councillors are on the unions side.

10:46**Chris Vander Doelen**:

U.S. cities, unlike Canadian cities, are allowed to impose income taxes. Detroit charges one per cent on everyone who works in the city, whether they live there or not. That negates the need for residency rules.

10:46[Comment From Jo-Anne]

I do not believe that out sourcing would not save money. Why would so many other municipalities have chosen to out source if not for the savings. Can we not get figures from those communities who outsource and see the figures ourselves.

10:46**Doug Schmidt**: Jeff asks why post-retirement benefits for new hires are SO important to the union that it's willing to strike so long. Nobody could have anticipated the strike would go this long. It has become the only line-in-the-sand issue in this dispute. The union argues that taking them away would create a two-tier system of benefits and that would create future conflict internally among employees.

10:46[Comment From Dwayne]

I think our society is just getting plain mean spirited

10:47[Comment From Jennifer]

Please don't make this a CUPE Soap box Chris.

10:47[Comment From summer]

i would also like to know what happens if a person tries to walk thru the picket line with garbage... are the strikers allowed to *push* them back? is that not illegal and can it not be considered a form of attack? i can understand not moving cars thru in the interest of not potentially hurting a picket, but people should be trying to just move thru them and exercise the RIGHTS OF THE TAX PAYERS!

10:47**Chris Vander Doelen**: There's already a two-tier system in place: CUPE workers in Windsor are the top tier, their "employer" taxpayers are the lower tier.

10:47[Comment From td]

Is the a legal deadline for this strike? As tax payers, we pay our due (hefty one) and demand the services.

10:48**Chris Vander Doelen**: The only deadline is starting the strike. It can go forever if the two sides choose to. I've been hearing people say "let them stay out for as long as they like."

10:48**Doug Schmidt**: Gary asks whether there have been any union membership meetings to go over the issues. Local CUPE leaders Jean Fox and Jim Wood both said Wednesday that such meetings took place with each local last week and that the membership strongly reaffirmed its support of the leadership.

10:49**Chris Vander Doelen**: Jennifer: I thought we were anti-CUPE, as earlier posters claim?

10:51**The Windsor Star**: We'll take any question submitted up to 11 a.m. Stay tuned after 11 a.m. for Chris and Doug's reponses. Thank you for participating, and your patience.

10:51[Comment From Jo-Anne]

I agree with you Marj Bondy!

10:51[Comment From summer]

John, in this economy EVERYONE is making concessions... CUPE should also be willing to be realistic, given the times we are currently living in and try negotiating in the future... when better times (hopefully) come

10:51[Comment From Joe]

CUPE asking to "keep what they have" - what, they're not asking for any raises? I think they are - heard 8% over 3 years + cash signing bonus + job security.

10:52[Comment From Tom]

CUPE should write a book at the end of this strike. HOW NOT TO RUN A STRIKE!

10:52[Comment From George]

What mediator? Mediator was gone a while ago...Mayor still there.

10:53[Comment From ed]

most of your questions answered are against the union why

10:54**The Windsor Star**: Ed at 10:30: We've been attempting to balance the questions between those submitted by pro- and anti-union contributors.

10:54[Comment From TTTT]

Cupe and the Caw should put there heads together and start a large protest and shut down some of the streets at main intersections,then we see how fast Eddie will work!

10:54[Comment From Lori]

I thought post retirement benefits were not covered by the previous contract but rather they were in a city bylaw. CUPE wants post retirement benefits to be entrenched in contract language rather than be changed by city council in a single vote. Eddie and council could change that bylaw very simply but the optics would not be so good. Why doesn't anyone come clean about this?

10:55[Comment From concerned]

John stated that they are not asking for demands just trying to keep what they have- isn't the problem with new hires who don't have the benefits because they haven't been hired?

10:55[Comment From Chad Boughner]

Stand Strong Mr. Mayor. The Majority of citizens are on your side!

10:55**Doug Schmidt**: Summer asks what happens if a person tries to walk through a picket line with garbage and whether "pushing" constitutes assault. The strikers have a legal right to picket, which means pedestrian and vehicle traffic can be delayed. While there should never be any physical contact, emotions are understandably running very high. It's why the police will observe and verbally intervene but not go crashing in with arrests and charges. Escalation, particularly in a protracted and bitter dispute, is a real danger. Everybody should just stay cool because if there

is an escalation, everybody loses and it probably does nothing to get this strike over with.

10:55[Comment From Boingo]

Chris - just read your column and totally agree with the sentiment. I like the parks the way they are - lots more ducks and other wildlife and amazingly, allergy season has been almost non-existent. As for a vote - I'm all for it.

10:56[Comment From George]

VanderDoelen for city chief negotiator!

10:56[Comment From Richard]

I believe that the health department should be issuing an order to clean up the garbage and cut the lawns in the public areas. Neglect of these areas constitutes a danger to the public and if ordered by the health unit the city could hire private contractors to do the work if CUPE won't.

10:56[Comment From Mike]

This is a very bad time for a municipal strike. Everyone in this city has had their pays cut or been laid off from some of our largest employers

10:56**Chris Vander Doelen:** I wouldn't want to mediate between the two sides of this strike for anything. Conflict is bad for karma, man.

10:57[Comment From Charles]

The Windsor Police Service appears to be supportive of the CUPE.

10:57[Comment From LA Resident]

Was recently in Niagara Falls where I learned the parks dept is an "essential" service. Any thoughts on making garbage collection the same and forcing the workers back?

10:57[Comment From Tom]

I hope it stops raining soon so I can cut the grass in my park. Oops, that's their job too!

10:57**Chris Vander Doelen:** Charles: you noticed that too?

10:58[Comment From L]

If, as the union claims the benefits don't kick in for 30 years, how about getting to work today. Having a job at all anymore is considered a benefit in this city! Benefits are privileges not rights. It's almost like dealing with a teenager. Expect expect expect. I know some of these union people are really feeling the crunch of this strike. And it's unfortunate for them to be lead in the way they are.

10:58**Chris Vander Doelen:** Making garbage collectors essential, on par with ICU nurses and surgeons, would be inappropriate.

10:58[Comment From Richard]

The real problem with post retirement, and any other benefits, fully paid by the employer is that they are an uncontrollable cost and the union has no incentive to do anything to control them. I believe any contract should set a maximum cost to the employer for these benefits to be renegotiated during each contract renewal so overall costs do not spiral out of control for the employer. That is what happened in the auto industry and the results are clear.

10:58[Comment From Mick]

I have heard that "mangement "that have moved into that position after 2007 do not have post retirement benefits --is this true ?? this is a two tier system --why can't CUPE accept the same?

10:59[Comment From M.J.]

It seems the union is playing with alot of what ifs? What if the new members eventually vote out our benefits? what if your children get hired and have no benefits? I think we need to deal with the facts....we cannot afford to pay for new hires benefits...This is NOT taking away from current f/t employees...We provide our own benefits, you will have to do the same. I cannot afford your benefits while trying to pay for my own. The new hires will know at the time they are hired that benefits are not included after reitirement. It seems to be a no-brainer to most, whats the problem?

10:59[Comment From ic]

Windsor library CUPE (2067.1) gave up post retirement benefits in 1998.

10:59[Comment From Bob]

Enough is enough. This strike has to end....sorry union guys, but the city is not behind you and citizens are hurting financially in homes across Windsor. Something is going to snap soon.....

10:59**Doug Schmidt:** Richard believes the health unit should be ordering garbage clean-ups of public areas. The health unit has been issuing orders, but far more often its inspectors have

simply responded to complaints and talked to the owner responsible for the offending property. The province's environment ministry has also been closely watching, which is why it ordered the city to open two free public dropoff sites. Strike or not, keeping a property clean is the responsibility of the owner.

10:59[Comment From Johnny]

The Windsor Star's website does not have a comment section for any CUPE related article. I know the comment boards have heated discussions but ifeel we do not have a voice anymore!

10:59**Chris Vander Doelen:** Richard; right now, the only check on CUPE is the ability of taxpayers to move out of the city to avoid the taxes associated with Windsor's high labour and operating costs. In the last 25 years, I bet two thirds of local growth has taken place outside city boundaries for that reason. Competition is good for taxpayers and consumers alike.

11:02**Chris Vander Doelen:** Bob, the strike doesn't HAVE to end. The city is coping just fine. It would be smart, however, if both sides found a way to sidle out of the fight. Existing CUPE employees keeping everything they currently have seems like a pretty big victory to me. Ask CAW members who have lost everything recently what they have chosen, if offered a deal like that?

11:03**The Windsor Star:** Johnny: Thanks for your comment. You're right: We have disabled comments on the strike stories because they were becoming mean-spirited, vindictive and weren't advancing a civil conversation.

11:03[Comment From Luc]

The P.R.B's were not negotiated in any CUPE contract! They are a by-law passed by council in the 50's

11:04**Doug Schmidt:** Boingo asks why CUPE is bringing outside supporters for the weekend and fears trouble. Those union supporters, an estimated 2,000 on buses, are coming for a rally on Friday, followed by a BBQ. Local CUPE leaders said it will be peaceful and friendly and that the community is invited. Why not give them the benefit of the doubt and join them for a hotdog? When this strike is over, those guys are still the ones cleaning up our garbage, making our parks look beautiful, handling our sewage and running this municipality's services.

11:04[Comment From Summer]

I believe that the cupe strikers want these future retiree benefits in order to assure that their offspring will continue to receive the benefits they enjoy. City hall is well known to be rampant with nepotism. Just think folks one third of these strikers don't live in the city of Windsor and pay much lower taxes than Windsorites.

11:04[Comment From Richard]

I heard the reason that the post retirement benefits for new hires is such an issue is due to the nepotism at City Hall. CUPE members may be trying to protect benefits for their relatives yet to be hired.

11:04**Chris Vander Doelen:**

PRBs? Only on insider uses jargon like that.

11:04[Comment From lori]

300,000.00 savings per day soon i wont have taxes to pay

11:05[Comment From Charles]

The Windsor Police Service appears to support CUPE. The picketing of the mayors house, slow response to picketers harassing garbage drop off ,etc Is this a fair assessment ?

11:05[Comment From concerned]

The Windsor Star has been fair I believe it wasn't Eddie yelling at children or holding Transit Windsor buses so the students couldn't get to school, why haven't the Windsor Police been fair? They look a little one sided from what I have seen myself.

11:06**Chris Vander Doelen:** Richard, that is a good point. Nepotism has always been rampant at City Hall, dating back half a century. It's almost impossible to stamp out. I'd like to see a complete list of city employees, including cops and fire fighters, to see how bad it is. Of course, they would refuse, citing "privacy" concerns as the reason to block public knowledge.

11:07**Should the City of Windsor agree to binding arbitration?**

Yes

(53%)

No

(47%)

11:07[Comment From Chad Boughner]

If the strikers want the same benefits as the council members, they should go back to school and earn it like the council members and mayor have done. You don't get more by complaining or demanding it. You get more by working hard at it. If a garbage man got the same thing as a council member or a mayor then we're no better than communist Russia.

11:07[Comment From Maria]

No Chris, its not the Windsor Star's fault.....its the strikers fault for making themselves look bad in front of the public eye. Might I remind you of the woman who threw the garbage out on the lawn in front of a little girl who just picked it up. The strikers are doing a good job of making themselves look like the fool, not Windsor Star.

11:08[Comment From Tim]

Two tiered pay systems should violate the equal pay for equal work philosophy which I think most people favour. What you are saying is that younger people should get paid less than older workers. Now would you agree that women should get paid less than men? No. It is illegal. But age discrimination seems to be OK.

11:08[Comment From Jo]

I couldn't agree with George more. I support the strikers also. I am not a CUPE member and I can't believe the people who want to see us living like a third world country.

11:08**Chris Vander Doelen:** Thanks, Maria. I hoist a coffee in your general direction!

11:08[Comment From Richard]

The STAR appears to be reflecting the opinion of the majority - just look at the comments here this morning.

11:08[Comment From Deeds]

the windsor star has never been neutral

11:09[Comment From Doug]

Chris why are you so against arbitration when it could get the workers back to work cleaning up the city and the process will probably take at least a year by which time RBC states Canada will be out of the recession. We can get the workers back to work and let the lawyers and negotiating teams do their thing. When parties go to arbitration it is not a done deal for each side. Realize when the city says the cost is 100,000 per employee that is based on the time line of living from age 65 - 90. If new hires put 5000 a year in for the first five years and the city matched this there would be 50,000 dollars put in the fund per employee after only five years at which time omers or greenshield could manage that money to make up the extra 50,000 over 25 years? The city said no to this because they do not want to put a dime in. At this point 12.5 years of the employee retirement benefits are covered till age 77 years old. The cost of doing business goes up every year for materials fuel etc. Zero tax raise year after year only cuts away current services. I live in Windsor and \$5 a year increase in nothing.

11:09[Comment From Tom]

The contract the city offered has already guaranteed lifetime benefits would be paid to present day city workers. A lawyer would have it in writing those workers are guaranteed they will not be taken away.

11:09[Comment From Joe T]

How much of an effect does our "union town" label and the strikes have on Windsor attracting new investment?

11:09**Doug Schmidt:** Lori said the \$300,000 a day in savings means she soon won't have to pay taxes. Nice dream. Those are saved labour costs from the striking CUPE workers, some of whom are currently not on the job collecting parking meter and bylaw enforcement funds (over \$1 million a month ... that's \$2M so far), then there's lost fee revenue for foregone licences and inspections etc. And then there are extra costs for security and then there's loads of overtime payments for the 400 non-union workers still on the job, some of whom have been on the job 7 days a week. I'm not anticipating a big tax break when this is over.

11:10**Chris Vander Doelen:**

The issues aren't neutral. We have to pick a side, decide what kind of city we want, and how much we are willing to pay for it. Newspapers are obligated to reveal the debates of the day to its readers, which means both sides. Why can't today's unions handle public debate any more?

11:10[Comment From Self-employed]

The union members seem "entitled to their entitlements" as per David Dodge. Times are changing and they have to change with it or else be prepared to be out a long time. I am not "entitled" to any benefits. I have to save money to pay for things they expect. I just paid \$230 for a cholesterol medication out of my own pocket. Save some money.

11:10[Comment From concerned]

How can outsourcing not be more cost effective when currently over \$5,000,000 is being paid in post retirement benefits. \$2800 x 1800 employees. Then there are the wages on top of that. I would think it would still be cheaper to outsource.

11:11[Comment From kim mccallum]

If people stopped bringing in their garbage - obviously they dislike the holdups in line....and used this time to send their message to the city councillors and mayor wouldn't it be more effective and you would not be stepping on anyone's toes?

11:11[Comment From Marc]

The workforce does not want to be led. They want their money. When they actually work, that is all the leading they will need.

11:11[Comment From Jo]

To Guest, the mayors benefits have everything to do with this.

11:11[Comment From Richard]

GM and Chrysler have both gone Bankrupt. There are a lot of tax paying unemployed residents that live in the City of Windsor that would like these CUPE jobs. Now is not the time to make demands. Especially about something that will not happen for 30 Years. Ask the CAW and UAW.

11:11[Comment From Private Citizen]

I am troubled by all these strikers going to the foodbanks and depleting them? Why doesn't their national, instead of sending troops to Windsor, send food and money to each local, and the strikers can do their shopping their? In my opinion, it may show the leadership, wow, what are we fighting for, future hires? Give me a break! I feel sid THE kid is just using Windsor as a test market for pattern bargaining for the TO contacts due this summer, thus the stalemate. Why does the leadership NOT submit the last offer of the city to its members? Maybe because 80% will vote for it? Just my thoughts, and look forward to maybe your opinion on this as well.

Thanks.

11:12[Comment From Lori]

This strike could end if the CUPE membership allowed their members to vote on the original agreement offered by the city. They won't let them do it. If a union is a democratic entity, let the membership vote and don't let a few yahoos at the top determine everything.

11:12[Comment From Chris]

how come the CUPE members are not all over their leadership (fox and jean) for the false hope they have provided in a "short strike"..?

11:12[Comment From Bill]

One question---Why is CUPE asking for "more" when the City is facing such gloomy economic prospects. Property Taxes here are amongst the highest in the Province, and the prospect of even higher taxes is dismal given the economic conditions this City now faces.

11:12[Comment From Henri]

I just returned from Matchette road drop-off - strikers were respectful - I declined signing petition for arbitration but accepted literature - wait time less than 5 minutes - I had no problem thanking strikers and they responded courteously

11:13[Comment From Richard]

The solution to this strike is to have the City pay a fixed amount per hour into a fund that is used to pay for ALL benefits and then let the workers decide how to apportion those funds. That way the city has a known cost now and in the future. I think It works like that in the construction trades.

11:13[Comment From Chris]

When a public worker lives in another city they take tax payers dollars with them, and pay their taxes elsewhere, effectively increasing the tax burden for the the residents of the municipality they work in.

11:13[Comment From John]

I find it amusing that CUPE leadership says once the garbage is put out it you can't touch it because its on city property. Well so is part of my lawn and CUPE has no problem with me cutting that, maybe they should start cutting my grass when they get back to work.

11:13[Comment From Morris Smith]

The city of Wilndsor would be bette off to subcontract this type of work out to individual sources. Better servoce less cost to tax payers

11:13[Comment From concerned]

Would they fight as hard, I believe they would still fight but not as hard as if say nepotism wasn't allowed?

11:14[Comment From Jo]

Workers did not create the current situation we are living through. Corporate greed did.

11:14[Comment From Johnny]

I will never understand how bullying residents you want to support your cause helps the union. Every person they delay or inconvenience is another supporter of the mayor. I did not vote for Francis but if he stays the course he will get my vote, even if he runs for the Liberals one day (shudder)

11:14[Comment From kim mccallum]

I am assuming none of you will be part of a two tiered system but remember that you will most likely be outnumbered one day and then we'll see if the future generation of workers has enough humanity to take your back when times are tough

11:14[Comment From gt]

agreed ... you are getting the hang of it ... well done !

11:14[Comment From Joe T]

Outsourcing introduces a level of competitive business to services - when city jobs are guaranteed, the taxpayer gets bled to death.

11:14**Chris Vander Doelen:** The solution to the strike is the strikers decideing to go back to work. We can't make them.

11:14**Doug Schmidt:** Deeds claims The Windsor Star "has never been neutral." I try to be fair and balanced and as accurate as possible in my reporting.

11:16**Chris Vander Doelen:** By the way, we aren't approving every comment or question here.

There are too many, and we can't address them all, as you've noticed. We're typing as fast as we can!

11:16[Comment From pm]

CUPE should concider themselves lucky that they have a job try living off of UI disability welfare etc.

11:16[Comment From Kevin]

why does the union think it can dictate to the taxpayers with the idea of no net-zero.. i want my city costs to go DOWN

11:16[Comment From I agree]

Since we are surviving without the services for the time being. Aren't CUPE workers somewhat concerned that when this is all said and done maybe we can save some tax payer money by laying off a few. It is obvious they are not all needed. They want to bully and make us pay for them, well maybe we have decided there are far too many to do the work!

11:16[Comment From John]

The essence of all unions is this... Give us what we want or we will; shut you down, harass you, threaten you, endanger you, make life miserable for you etc... Imagine if the rest of society functioned this way. Totally unacceptable. Government workers shouldn't even be allowed to unionize.

11:16[Comment From Bubba]

Given the health issues involved, garbage pick-up and disposal should be deemed an essential service where striking would not be allowed. Could a law be passed retroactively with the backing of the Minister of Health??

11:16**Chris Vander Doelen**: PM: it's forgotten by the strikers how many people in Windsor are living on almost nothing. There's a ton of suffering taxpayers out there; they don't need extra costs added to the backs right now.

11:16[Comment From Johnny]
Nicely said chris.

11:17[Comment From Jim]
I actually enjoying going to the Pillette Transfer Station or WDS. Great service and really little cost. This strike could last a year and I wouldn't notice a thing

11:17[Comment From Dave]
I was wondering from watching videos, what gives CUPE members the right to touch/lean against someones personal vehicle?

11:17[Comment From Aaron]
Since we're going to have 850 'guests' (19 buses x ~ 45 passengers) in our midst tomorrow, care to speculate on the make up of them? I predict it will be one of three:

11:17**Doug Schmidt**: Wow. These queries are coming in fast and furious and this is my first time doing something like this ... keep 'em coming but sorry can't get to them all.

11:17[Comment From Kevin]
i have called my councillor George, and told him to NOT to accept arbitration

11:17[Comment From To verra todd]
You're so wrong. Council is focusing on the future. Thats why they are trying to cut benefits till death. Because in 30 years paying for benefits could be 100x as much as now.

11:17[Comment From Chris]
to George - my suggestion is to call your union leadership and demand an end to this strike

11:17[Comment From Concerned]
Is the Windsor police excercising good judgment or ignoring the law by allowing cupe strikers to hold up city residents for 3 hours while dumping their garbage?

11:17[Comment From Tim]
Can't the workers at the outsourced company go on strike? How will this prevent strikes or stoppage of work?

11:17[Comment From gt]
Chris I commend your position and your generally and consistently well "thought-out " views on most matters.

11:18[Comment From Luc]
Council timed this strike to their advantage. They chose to send CUPE out on strike on an issue that won't change anything for another 30 years.....

11:18[Comment From Ted]
I retired from the army after 25 years of service and I do not get post retirement benefits. Any medical, insurance, disability, etc that I want, I have to pay for out of my pocket. Can someone explain why do garbage men think they deserve more than the defenders of our freedoms?

11:18**Chris Vander Doelen**: Thanks, GT.

11:18[Comment From ic]
The \$200/week strike pay means the CUPE membership must be tapping in to all/any alternative funds sources just to stay solvent. After 9 weeks+, you will never see that money return. You have already lost more than you will ever hope to gain in the next or future contracts. Time to settle and stop the bleeding CUPE.

11:19**Chris Vander Doelen**: And by the way, I'd like to thank those taking part today for not resorting to emoticons. They would have ruined everything! 😊

11:21[Comment From Kevin]
so doug.. two tier as in seniority? more senior workers get more vacation.. and fine..no two tier.. you ALL lose it

11:21[Comment From Dre]
If the city would have locked out the CUPE would the public view this strike differently...

11:21[Comment From jw]
if it cost more so be it, at least the outsource company's pick up whatever is at the curb like they do in the county, they aren't afraid to do a little work unlike cupe members.

11:21**Chris Vander Doelen**: Dre; true, but the city didn't lock them out. So it is what it is.

11:23**Doug Schmidt:** Johnny can't understand how the union is hoping to get public support by "bullying residents." This strike has been a huge hassle for the whole city. Any union's power in a strike comes from withdrawing its services, in this case it's a public union providing city-wide services we all depend on. The union's hope is that enough inconvenience will lead to enough pressure on mayor and council to reach a satisfactory deal. I agree, a public sector strike is different from a private sector strike ... lots more politics.

11:24[Comment From Rob]

I keep hearing about a connection between the editor of the Windsor Star and the mayor's office. (Someone's wife works directly with the mayor?) If this connection exists when was the last time, or first time, that this connection has been acknowledged by the editorial board to the public? I think that such a possible conflict of interest should be disclosed.

11:24**Chris Vander Doelen:**

The union has every right to withdraw their services. That is the essence of freedom. I don't think they should have the right to block other people's freedom of movement, however.

11:25[Comment From Michelle]

people need to understand that the services we issue are not just to Windsor citizen's only. Ontario Works issues to all the surrounding areas also

11:25[Comment From Lori]

The union has to listen to its membership -- many who are hurting financially. Do they want to get the BEST agreement or AN agreement? Maybe the next contract would be a more appropriate time to go for some of these things. You have to know when to hold um and know when to fold um

11:25[Comment From ed]

what are my tax dollars doing for me now

11:25[Comment From Jeff]

thanks for that answer Doug

11:25[Comment From Jim]

George - the disruptions are getting us to call our councillors. We are telling them to not GIVE IN.

11:26**Doug Schmidt:** To ic: the \$200 a week CUPE strike pay doesn't come from the local union alone.

11:26[Comment From Jo]

I support the CUPE workers. I work a contract job and have no benefits. I want better for myself and my fellow man.

11:26[Comment From Chris (non cupe)]

I understand the rights of the strikers, but what about the rights of the people in the wrong place at the wrong time?

11:26[Comment From Don]

Outsourcing has been shown and proven it'll be cheaper and ask anyone outside the city, their garbage service is much better

11:26**Chris Vander Doelen:** Ed; your tax dollars are paying for policing, fire protection, and management trying to keep everything together. Cops and fire cost more than CUPE, actually.

11:26[Comment From Dave]

The smell will disappear when winter hits & it freezes....lol

11:26[Comment From gt]

our society has every reason for becoming mean-spirited as a result of the imposition CUPE forces on them with each passing day this was started by CUPE should we taxpayers just lay down and give whatever they demand(?) I support the mayor fully ! Let them stay out until replaced .

11:27[Comment From Tim]

Chris, that comment about two-tier is stupid! Who says you make less than the CUPE workers? Are you doing similar work? Are you employed by the city? No, so don't be silly, you just ruin any credibility you might have had.

11:27[Comment From Andrew]

Any place that has 'full time' and 'part time' employees have the same two tier systems of

benefits and such. I work in that environment. I'm certain its all too common these days.

11:27[Comment From Kevin]

if the membership wants to stay out.. let them..but they better stay out of their employer's, the taxpayer, way

11:27[Comment From Luc]

Why does council not change the by-law of post retirement bennefits themselves?

11:27[Comment From pm]

would you come back to this city if you were a tourist and seen the condition it is in NOT

11:28[Comment From pp]

I am surprised by all the people that say outsource outsource...Is more unemployment really what this city needs ? I doubt it. This things looks almost personal now between Eddie and CUPE and us poor taxpayers are caught in the middle. Why not just say "Ok come back to work, and let's talk about the one remaining issue once the economy is back to normal or in 1 year at the latest whichever comes first" After that they can go back to strike again but not in an economy that is tanking

11:28[Comment From andre]

does anyone know what ever happened to the cupe employee that was caught on a cell phone camera dumping garbage in the park 2 weeks ago?

11:28[Comment From Tonymc]

The CUPE union leadership should allow their members to vote on the contract that was last offered. Bar that, then a vote overseen by the labour board that the city's looking to do. It would be interesting what the outcome would be. I think the union leadership is afraid of what will happen and are more headstrong and are looking to put on a brave face in light of what's happened over the last 8 weeks.

11:28[Comment From Tim]

I've read that the post retirement benefits are not even currently in the collective agreement but are actually part of a bylaw that council passed and council has full power to revoke. Has council not explored this option to bring an end to this work stoppage

11:29[Comment From gm]

How long or how bad does the strike have to get before the Canadian Government can step in and force workers back to work while talks resume?

11:29[Comment From Mike]

Why doesn't Eddie just call for a vote with the Ministry of Labour to circumvent the union? I know for a fact it will pass with Local 543, as the majority are more than ready to return to work! Union leaders have lost touch and control of this strike!!

11:31**Chris Vander Doelen:**

I earn far less than people in public sector jobs doing comparable work. I know the guy at city hall who does a similar job, and I believe he makes at least \$25,000 more per year than I do, with far, far better benefits.

11:31**Doug Schmidt:** Luc asks why council doesn't change the post-retirement benefits bylaw itself.

Council has the power to do that but imagine the response from the city's unionized workers.

Note: non-union workers at city hall have been trying to organized into their own union ever since the city unilaterally ended their post-retirement benefits. In any event, this has become the single biggest hurdle remaining to settling the strike. That horse has left the barn.

11:33**Chris Vander Doelen:** GM: the federal government has no jurisdiction over municipal

governments. Cities are a creature of the provinces, legally, so only Queen's Park can intervene.

I don't imagine the McGuinty Liberal government will want to get involved, however. YOu could ask Dwight Duncan or Sandra Pupatello.

11:35**Chris Vander Doelen:** It's interesting, by the way, that everyone in Windsor seems to refer to

the mayor as "Eddie." We never called Mayor Hurst "Mikey," or John Millson "Johnny." Is it because of his relatively young age, or the fact people feel more familiar with him? Just throwing that out there . . .

11:38**Doug Schmidt:** To Private Citizen: CUPE has set up its own food bank for striking members in need of help, and other CUPE locals have been donating to a compassionate fund. Some of your other questions I've responded to in previous postings.

11:38**The Windsor Star:** Thanks, everyone, for contributing your questions and comments. We intended to make this a one-hour discussion, but your overwhelming response suggested we extend it. Chris and Doug will continue to answer some questions posted before 11:30 a.m., but we will have to wrap this up at around noon. We hope to make this a regular feature and hope you will join us in the future.

11:41**Chris Vander Doelen:** Outsourcing doesn't create unemployment, as some one above has suggested. It transfers the jobs from one place to another. The people who do garbage pickup in Essex County live in Essex County, not some other planet.

11:43**Doug Schmidt:** Charles believes the Windsor police are showing favoritism to the strikers. Like the CUPE members, the cops are city employees, but the reason they're not jumping in there is because, they say, it would only serve to escalate and inflame the situation. My mother always says to take the high road.

11:45**Doug Schmidt:** I won't let Chris beat me on the emoticons. 😎😏😱😄

11:48**Doug Schmidt:** Some readers have asked about the credibility of the polls being used by CUPE and the media (Windsor Star included). I go with what John Diefenbaker said, that they're what dogs use to relieve themselves. I find they tend to prove whatever the party commissioning them wants them to show. But I'm usually only right 19 times out of 22 with an error rate of +/- 6 per cent.

11:51**The Windsor Star:** Someone asked about Star editorial page editor John Coleman's connection with the mayor's office and here's a response from Star publisher Jim Venney.

11:51**The Windsor Star:** The Windsor Star editorial opinions are developed and finalized in the Publisher's Office. They are developed in a group setting by a group usually composed of Publisher Jim Venney, Editor-in-Chief Marty Beneteau, Editorial Page Editor John Coleman and Karen Hall. We believe that even if one member of our group has a bias or conflict, the remainder of the group is in a position to offset that bias. We also believe this method in an organization setting actually results in opinion formation that is far less open to conflict of interest that is more possible in the world of say - individual blogs. In this case the potential for conflict for one member of the group is not a conflict for the overall group. Members of the group are able to adjust (or not adjust) as they see fit given their knowledge of the situation and the people involved.

12:33**The Windsor Star:** Subsequent to closing, Tim at 11:53 asked, "So does John Coleman have a connection to the mayor's office? Yes or no?" The answer to the question is yes. John Coleman is The Star's editorial page editor and his wife is Norma Coleman, who is chief of staff in the mayor's office. Please read The Windsor Star comment above to understand how editorial opinions are formulated.