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## **DOWNTOWN: Dump closure small consolation for residents**

Residents want garbage out and their park cleaned up

By JUSTIN SKINNER

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Christie Pits is no longer accepting garbage, but local residents are rankled that the trash piled up in the park throughout the early days of the city workers' strike remains.

Residents in the area have opposed the dump site since it was first proposed roughly two weeks ago. Many staged protests as the Alex Duff ice rink filled up with trash and the stench of garbage became less and less tolerable, with some local residents even joining picketing CUPE workers in blocking a pesticide company from spraying the garbage with chemicals to prevent pest problems.

The dump stopped accepting new garbage on Sunday, July 5 and pesticide spraying began shortly thereafter, following an injunction by a Superior Court Judge stating the park was not to be blockaded.

Monica Gupta, chair of Friends of Christie Pits Park, said the fact no new garbage would be added to the dump came as small consolation to those in the neighbourhood.

"We're not overjoyed by any of this," she said. "So what if Christie Pits is not accepting any more garbage? The fact remains that all temporary dump sites are in public parks."

Gupta said she and others in the community are calling on Toronto Mayor David Miller to find a way to get the trash out of the park as soon as possible and stage a full clean-up of the park.

"Garbage should be put in transfer stations where legal dumping takes place," she said.

She noted, in addition to the smell, the dump site is an eyesore and local residents are concerned about leachate, a potentially toxic liquid that comes from waste and the effects of pesticides.

Despite the environmental concerns over the permethrin being sprayed on the garbage, Gupta said residents would not interfere with further pesticide spraying.

"As a group, Friends of Christie Pits Park will not be stopping (the spraying,)" she said. "We believe it's a no-win situation. No one wins whether they spray or don't spray."

Local resident Boris Steipe, a biochemist, has taken samples of water, which had pooled in the ice rink during rainy days earlier in the strike. He is looking to send the samples to labs to determine what problems the waste runoff and pesticides might have.

"As a biochemist, I'm thinking what (lab tests) would show is that this liquid is toxic," he said. "It might show that environmental regulations were exceeded by a certain amount. What we want to know is what effect that will have."

Steipe also claims the closing of the dump amounts to little more than a euphemism, particularly given some Torontonians have been caught on camera throwing garbage into the ice rink even after the site shut down.

He said that, given the amount of trash in the rink, closing the site to new drop-offs is a token gesture, at best.

"It's still open and exposed," he said. "Right now, there are huge piles of garbage and we're all hoping something is done to take them out."

Steipe added he lives southwest of the ice rink, which is fortunately usually upwind from the dump site.

"I feel bad for the people living just north, because the stench there is really unbearable," he said.

Residents continue to hope a solution to their problem will present itself, though they are understandably skeptical, given many feel their hopes have already been ignored when the city decided to turn a portion of their local park into a garbage dump in the first place.

"This was all about making (dumping garbage) more convenient for people," Gupta said. "But at what price?"