

Christie Pits to close but trash stays put

City won't say whether public outcry prompted shutdown as it opens two new dumpsites

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With two temporary garbage dumps nearly full just 13 days into the civic workers' strike, the city is closing both and opening two new ones.

The Christie Pits site, the scene of ongoing protests from neighbours opposed to part of their park being turned into a garbage dump, will close to additional trash at 7 p.m. tomorrow, city officials said.

The York Mills Arena site at York Mills Rd. and Bayview Ave. was closed last night.

Garbage will remain at both sites, however.

The two new sites are at Centennial Arena, 1967 Ellesmere Rd. in Scarborough, and at Wilket Creek-Sunnybrook Park, near Eglinton Ave. and Leslie St. They'll operate 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, like the 17 other drop-off locations.

The news wasn't exactly music to the ears of Govind Rao, a member of Friends of Christie Pits Park, a group opposed to the dump.

"Our response is there's nothing to celebrate. The garbage isn't going anywhere. It just means there'll be reduced traffic in the neighbourhood," Rao said yesterday.

"When it rains there's still going to be leachate," he added.

A city manager on hand to supervise drop-offs at Christie Pits told Rao there were 80 tons of garbage in the rink as of late yesterday afternoon. Rao said the site could theoretically hold twice that, but believes the city closed it early because of the local outcry.

Asked whether the city is caving in to community complaints, Geoff Rathbone, the city's general manager of solid waste management, didn't really answer the question.

"You'll note that the first site that's closing is actually the York Mills site," he said. "We're monitoring all our sites for capacity."

But the closing may have been partly an attempt to resolve an impasse with residents.

Since Monday, Rao's group, with the help of striking CUPE workers, has been preventing a firm, contracted by the city, from spraying a pesticide on the garbage.

Residents fear the insecticide, permethrin, could harm cats and perhaps humans. But on Thursday Dr. David McKeown, Toronto's medical officer of health, said the product breaks down quickly and urged residents to let the pest control team in.

The group ignored his urging and turned away the sprayer twice yesterday, according to Rao.

Meanwhile, another inspection found evidence of "active insect infestations." So McKeown announced he'll be issuing an order to the city under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act to implement an effective insect control program at the site.

Rao said his group still plans to defy that order.

At dinnertime yesterday the smell of the trash wafted over a cool evening breeze.

But Angie and Dominic Mammoliti, out walking their dogs, said they didn't believe angry residents prompted the city's decision to close the Christie site. It's simply full, they said.

The couple have been minimizing their trash and storing it at home.

The news of Christie Pits' closing prompted concern among residents near Earls court Park, another dumpsite near Lansdowne Ave. and Davenport Rd. They fear more trash will migrate to their neighbourhood.

"We have to close the window. We cannot use the veranda. We are kind of hiding in the house," said Dave Pham, who has lived in the area with wife Cecile for about 10 years.

With files from Tess Kalinowski