

Dump closing leaves a bad taste

Christie Pits residents must still live with stink

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Nick Kyonka

STAFF REPORTER

After two weeks of protests and legal challenges, Christie Pits residents finally saw the disputed temporary dump site in their park closed, yet it was hardly the sweet smell of victory that drifted through the neighbourhood last night.

Instead, the stench of overripe refuse could be smelled as far away as Harbord St. as the last trash was accepted at 7 p.m. It was the final day that the near-capacity site was open for dumping.

"My first reaction (to the smell) is a sort of gag reflex," said Monica Gupta, who chairs Friends of Christie Pits Park, a local residents association that has opposed the dump site since the city workers strike began on June 22.

"It's awful and it's disgusting for everyone," Gupta said.

Earlier in the day, she and other opponents of the dump were dealt another loss when city-hired contractors were allowed to spray pesticides over the garbage piled in the park in accordance with a public health order issued last Thursday.

Following that order, several residents had joined picketing strikers on Friday and Saturday to block attempts to spray the site with a city-approved cocktail of maggot- and rodent-killing pesticides.

But on Saturday evening an Ontario Superior Court judge issued a four-day injunction against the blockade, and early yesterday afternoon, when pesticide control experts arrived, both residents and strikers backed down.

As of last night, both Gupta and union spokeswoman Pat Daley said it was unlikely either group would continue to block further attempts to exterminate the area when the injunction expires Wednesday evening.

"We're concerned about the spraying, but we also believe, as a group, that it's a no-win situation," Gupta said following a brief strategy meeting with her association.

"No one will win if it's sprayed, but no one will win if it's not sprayed because the residents will have to suffer the consequences of flies and other vermin."

Even as the Christie Pits dump site was shutting down last night, 19 other sites across the city continued to swell with rubbish, including two new sites that opened this weekend at Sunnybrook Park and Centennial Park Arena in Scarborough.

Workers confirmed both those new sites were sprayed with pesticides over the weekend, but the spraying drew



STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR

A "closed" sign went up at the temporary garbage dump at Christie Pits late July 5, 2009 after the city decided the park site had reached capacity.

little attention from local residents.

"Most of (the sites) are being sprayed every day," city spokeswoman Patricia Trott confirmed. "But it depends on the circumstances of each individual site."

Trott said city officials will, in the meantime, monitor the volume of refuse piling up at other temporary dump locations across the city and are prepared to open more sites if necessary.