

Fighting parking tickets just got harder

Jul 25, 2009 04:30 AM

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STAFF REPORTER

Fighting a Toronto parking ticket is challenging at the best of times, and at least twice as hard during the civic workers strike.

The city wants people to pay their tickets, not fight them, which is why applying for a court date is an ordeal. Drivers have 15 days to go to one of only four court offices, where they can get in a long line to request a trial.

But for those issued the most common ticket – \$30 for overtime parking – it's worth the bother.

As revealed last year in this column, the city accepts applications for \$30 ticket trials and a clerk tells the applicant a court date will arrive in the mail. But the ticket simply disappears and a conviction is never registered.

City court officials have figured out it's much cheaper to pretend to offer a trial than actually provide one.

After the strike began on June 22, three of the four court offices that accept applications for trials were closed. The city building at 1530 Markham Rd. in Scarborough remained open.

Lineups were so daunting that one of the other offices, at 2700 Eglinton Ave. W., was re-opened.

The drive to Scarborough or Eglinton and Keele is enough to deter people who live downtown, never mind the long lineups there.

There's no break offered on the timeline, either. Anyone who doesn't apply for a trial within 15 days must pay the fine, or a conviction will be registered against their licence plate renewal.

We called city spokesman Rob Andrusevich Thursday to see whether the city is considering extending the period for applying for a trial, given the circumstances.

"Check the website," Andrusevich said several times, referring to toronto.ca, before he hung up on us while we were still pleading for information.

For the record, here's what toronto.ca says under the "parking tag operations" heading: Open — "first appearance" facilities at 1530 Markham Rd. and 2700 Eglinton Ave. W. "Residents can attend to request a trial date, dispute parking tags and make payments. Extended business hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday.

"Delays are expected."

No kidding.

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