

Is Ted Reeve Dr. city's smelliest street?

The Star goes dumpster diving to sniff out the foulest-smelling part of the strike-ravaged city

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It's an assaulting stench that forces nostrils wide open and bullies a rancid gust down the gullet. Hand slaps over mouth and nose, pathetic protection against awakening gorge.

No wonder Ted Reeve Drive is deserted.

It is Toronto's stinkiest street. The city's Listeria Lane. Many families with young children are housebound, prisoners now that their east-end playground – just steps from their homes – is buried under a strikebound city's refuse.

The *Star* went dumpster diving this week, touring four sites that are closest to residential areas and, basically, inhaled. Okay, inhaled and tried not to vomit. An unscientific analysis, for sure. But one of those noses belonged to *Star* wine critic Gord Stimmell, the newsroom bloodhound who for a day agreed to sample the bouquet of decay.

"Arghgakphhtsplak" was Stimmell's strangled reaction when we opened the van doors at Ted Reeve Drive near Main and Gerrard Sts. and a tsunami of stink washed over him. He stumbled onto the sidewalk, clutched his chest, then pointed his snout at the broiling bouillabaisse spoiling the air.

And what was the most overpowering aroma?

"Fecal matter," concluded our Sherlock of Chardonnay.

No &%, say the locals.

Shelley Brennan's home is one of many in the Ted Reeve subdivision that face the garbage mountains. The mother of three young children is angry her community has become the neighbourhood cesspool, forcing her family and friends to stay indoors, close their windows and crank up the air conditioning to escape the overpowering smell.

"We're not going outside at all," said the part-time high school teacher, who helped organize a public protest at the Ted Reeve dump site last night.

"There are no more informal chats on the sidewalk, or running into people with the dog or having a glass of wine on the patio. Nobody is doing any of that. It has literally, thus far, completely changed the way we live."

One of Brennan's neighbours, Catherine Churchill Frank, was more graphic.



CARLOS OSORIO/TORONTO STAR

Residents organize a small protest at the Ted Reeve Drive dumpsite. (July 16, 2009)

"Not only can you smell it," she said, waving at the rotting piles about 50 metres from her front door, "you can taste it."

So could the *Star's* Odour Decoder.

In ranking the rankest, Stimmell declared Christie Pits to be more foul than Ted Reeve – but with a caveat. Christie Pits' waste is in a valley where the smell sits in a concentrated form until a breeze lifts it out. When a pungent wind wafted onto nearby Barton Ave., it left Stimmell gasping for air that didn't linger on his palate like a steaming pile of elephant dung.

One of the Christie Pits locals is Boris Steipe, a microbiologist who, like Brennan, is advocating for residential areas to be dump-free during strikes since there are many "convincing alternatives" at low-traffic spaces like the port lands.

The University of Toronto associate professor in biochemistry also understands why smells are alarming. "The smell elicits a strong emotional response, it keeps us away from trouble but it is not actually trouble in and of itself," Steipe said in an email.

The two other sites the *Star* visited were, comparatively, far from homes. Scarborough Arena, a huge dump site, is separated from many homes to the south by Kingston Rd.'s four lanes. North Toronto Arena had the wind in its favour, keeping the fumes off Edith Dr. The Ted Reeve site was the dubious winner on Stimmell's stink-o-meter because the effluvium was constant, regardless of wind. The oozing refuse is at street level, very close to Ted Reeve Dr. houses and for those unfortunate residents that gagging smell is the visitor that won't leave. Even though the dump was officially closed yesterday, the maggoty remains shall remain until the strike ends.