

Down in the dumps

The stench, the garbage, the bugs -- and soon pesticides -- have park lovers crying foul

By [MICHELE MANDEL](#) AND [DON PEAT](#), SUN MEDIA

Last Updated: 5th July 2009, 3:25am

It's the pits alright.

As Toronto residents lined up to drop off their trash on the second-last day the Christie Pits dump was in operation, many people trying to enjoy the park were left steaming hotter than their new neighbourhood trash pile.

The gagging stench rising from the dump was too much for Maria Silva and her son Joseph yesterday, so they left the park and headed back home.

"It's disgusting," the mom said, as her disappointed seven-year-old pulled on her hand. "Doing something like this in the summer, it's not fair. They're not thinking about the kids, just about themselves and the government does nothing."

Usually they would have spent a sunny July afternoon at the pool and playing in the playground. But the strike has drained the water and left the park too smelly to enjoy. They would have gone to Centre Island, but the ferries aren't running. She wanted to take her son to see the flowers at Allan Gardens, but the strike has closed that as well.

"So we stay home and he gets grumpy," sighed Silva, a 34-year-old housekeeper. "The summer's too short. They always talk about kids first but it's all about money, money, money."

It's all in a day at the city's most controversial temporary dump. Although officials announced it will close at 7 p.m. today, the garbage will stay until the strike ends. As the strike grinds on without any signs of a quick ending, the grim reality that the garbage may not be going anywhere soon, has caused some residents to flee.

Neighbours said the pregnant, new immigrant from Sweden who lived next door to the dump had packed her bags and was seen getting into a taxi yesterday morning.

Signs on her lawn read, "Your waste in park space is a disgrace."

"She said, 'I'm done,'" confided Himy Syed of the Friends of Christie Pits Park. "She couldn't take the smell anymore and now that they're going to spray pesticides there, she couldn't stay."

Down the hill, Dexter Simon was picking up torn yellow pages that were strewn in one corner of the park, trying to create a clean spot to hang his hammock and practise his music. "It makes me so angry," he said of the rubbish strewn everywhere. "If people are going to dump their s...t, at least put it in a bag."

The struggling reggae musician is currently on unemployment and is desperately looking for work. "They're striking -- and I would take their job in a moment," said Simon, 39.

MICHELE.MANDEL@SUNMEDIA.CA