

## Garbage hits the Pits

### Residents raise stink over plans to make Christie Pits a dump site

By [DON PEAT](#), SUN MEDIA

Last Updated: 26th June 2009, 3:34am

Toronto Mayor David Miller and Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone's political bro-mance may be in the pits after this strike.

Facing a revolt in his ward from Christie Pits residents furious their park is about to be filled with stockpiles of trash, the local councillor issued a statement yesterday slamming city officials, including the mayor's office, for turning the Pits into one of 19 dumps.

"Over the past few days, I have been advocating strongly with Joe Pennachetti (City Manager), Geoff Rathbone (Solid Waste Management), Richard Butts (Deputy City Manager) and Mayor Miller's office, NOT to use Christie Pits as one of the City's alternate dump sites," Pantalone stated in a release yesterday.

"Until this afternoon, City staff refused to share the 19 sites with City Councillors."

The deputy mayor, who refused further interview requests, says he gave staff alternative locations in his ward but they didn't listen to him.

#### SMALL PROTEST

"(I) did not receive the courtesy of serious consideration of those alternate sites!" he wrote. "I strongly oppose the use of this location as a dump site and will continue to advocate this position.

"Christie Pits should not be used as a dump!"

The terse afternoon statement came after a handful of Christie Pits residents had a small protest beside the proposed dump location, inside the park's outdoor hockey rink.

Most of the protesters were from the group Friends of Christie Pits and chanted "parks are not dumps" and "Liar, liar Pants-alone on fire."

Group members said they were frustrated that despite assurances to the contrary from Pantalone's staff, they'll have to contend with piles of the stinky stuff.

Earlier this week in an e-mail to the group, Pantalone's staff assured them the park was not a dump.

"Christie Pits, nor any park, will not be used as a garbage dump," the e-mail stated.

When asked why Pantalone had been so wrong about the Pits not becoming a dump, a grumbling Miller told reporters, "you'll have to speak to him."

Residents aren't giving up, they're vowing to stage further protests and told the Sun they aren't ruling out picketing their neighbourhood dump site.

"I think it's a reasonable thing to voice our opposition in every possible legal way," resident Boris Steipe said. "If CUPE can picket transfer stations, I think we can picket here."

Resident Nikki Rochon said she's concerned the garbage will pollute the community garden she started in the park this year.

Rochon was in the park yesterday tending to the tiny plots of vegetables and flowers -- four plots are growing food for local community organizations.

"What about rats? If they find all this stuff they're not going to leave," she said. "It seems the city doesn't really care.

"The city (parks') slogan is a city within a park not a city within a dump site."

Toronto's solid waste general manager Geoff Rathbone explained the sites were chosen from a list of approximately 200 initial sites.

"Christie Pits was a particular challenge, but we also have to ensure that, especially in very densely populated areas where there is significant amounts of residential garbage generated, that we have neighbourhood based temporary drop-off facilities," Rathbone said.

#### CITY DID LISTEN

He said the city did listen to the community's concerns about the Pits' gardens, so the temporary dump was put at the northwest corner of the park, 150 metres away from the community garden.

"What we did do, at a number of sites, was listen to residents' concerns," Rathbone said.

Christie Pits isn't the only parkland dump site that has residents fuming.

Green 13, a community green group, expressed their outrage that the city plans to dump trash on the waterfront in Sunnyside Park.

"At a time of great economic uncertainty, with many city services currently unavailable, we need our great public parks more than ever," Green 13 chairman Christopher Holcroft stated in a release.

"Particularly at Sunnyside, enjoyed by so many Torontonians every day coming to cool off by the lake, marvel at the tremendous view or take a stroll or bike ride along the boardwalk, the presence of a garbage dump is unimaginable."

The group urged the city to encourage residents to create less waste and use home composters and have smaller dumping stations in city-owned parking lots.

DON.PEAT@SUNMEDIA.CA