

HOT TOPICS

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Rink crisis - Inspectors come to the park: the Sequel

On December 18, 2003, three short weeks after the Parks and Rec restructuring plan was announced, and [contested](#), City of Toronto employees arrived to conduct a health and safety inspection of the rink house.

On Dec.18, occupational health and safety inspectors Jim Mackay and Danny Neill came to the park and made it evident that there were big problems with the way we use the rink house. They wrote a report asking that the new community kitchen be destroyed and the locks on the garage door be changed so that no one other than the zamboni driver could go in there. They ordered all the giant puppets to be removed from their perch in the garage rafters, and these were carted away to other parts of the city. A sad week!

The outcry that followed, the newspaper coverage, the intervention of our new councillor, Adam Giambrone, and the many thoughtful e-mails sent by so many people, all contributed to producing a silver lining that at times seemed to engulf the black cloud almost entirely. Parks and Recreation director Don Boyle gave our area's parks and rec manager James Dann a free hand in making all possible accommodations to the workplace safety suggestions in the report. The blue propane Olympia ice-resurfacer disappeared and suddenly there was a shiny white gas-powered zamboni instead, sent by rink supervisor Brian Green. The jerry-built shelves in the garage were replaced with strong, elegant ones built by city carpenters. When the public health inspector came, he ordered a fourth sink in each of the two little rinkhouse kitchens. The city paid for these to be put in, and for the dishwasher to be moved to a better location. All the clutter of years of storage by all the many folks who use the rink house – even the old cans of paint from when the rink was first built – were carted away from the breezeway, with the help of 8 maintenance staff. New fire extinguishers were brought in and mounted, hooks were put up to coil the giant zamboni hoses, broken kitchen equipment (donated, but at the end of its useful life, as donated items often are) was carted away. The whole place looks great.

The clean-up and reorganization were one part: finding the boundaries between the legal regulations and the one-size-fits-all philosophy was another. The workplace safety inspectors and the fire safety inspectors all made it clear that in their view, a building built for one purpose ought to be used only for that purpose. Public health raised their eyebrows. Mixed-use adaptations were just seen as wrong. But no rule could be found to back up this approach. It was the same with the lack of clear boundaries between staff and volunteers, which the inspectors identified as too risky. But Don Boyle said: "we have to work closely with volunteers, all over the city. In each neighbourhood, the boundaries are worked out differently. If it works well, we'll try to support it – that's the point of parks and recreation." That's his

decision, and he's sticking to it.

As it stands now, all inspections done to date have concluded that our clubhouse activities are within range of what the regulations require. We don't know how many other inspectors are still to come and what they will identify.

Here's a bit of history:

Claire Tucker Reid, General Manager, Parks and Recreation

City of Toronto

Dear Claire,

I have just been informed that Dufferin Rink will be shut down, probably tomorrow, if we continue with the mixed use that we now have. Two health and safety inspectors came and quite evidently found the whole scene we run, abominable. I called James Dann to come down and they gave him all the details.

After 10 years of community-building at Dufferin Grove Park, it is a stunning experience for me to find that two gentleman can come and tell us that what our neighbourhood has built in this park is basically a giant heap of safety violations.

It is ironic and sad that as parks and recreation facilities all over the city, especially rinks, are crumbling before our eyes, one of the best outdoor rinks in the city would be closed. The Christmas holidays are set to begin. To have to face the end of our community dinners, the bread, the farmers' market, and much of what makes the rink work so well, will be a very serious blow for our neighbourhood.

The two health and safety inspectors who came today told me that it is a fallacy to think that parks belong to citizens: they belong to the corporate entity called Toronto. I hope that not everyone in city government feels this way. Please let us know where you stand.

Jutta Mason

Read more detail in the [**January 2004 newsletter**](#). The outcry that followed that first alarming day was expressed in a large number of e-mails (many interesting, thoughtful e-mails, some of which are [**posted for you to read**](#) — from park friends Drew Simmons, Ms. Roscoe Handford, Mary Myers, Shanti Nahata, Caitlin Shea, Jane Price, Jackie Monders, Loren Grebanier, Tim Freeman, Kathy Patterson, John Broley, Vivienne Smietana, Michaelle McLean, Margaret Mikkelborg, Annick Mitchell, Henrik Bechmann, and from Claire Tucker-Reid and from Carmen Smith of the Mayor's office.

New Highrises on Dovercourt:

In December, 2002 Tom McCauley [**posted**](#) a letter from Councillor Mario Silva regarding an application that local residents would view as an item to take issue with. For more background on Andrew Munger's

letter below [15 November 2003], see posts on the Friends' [Yahoo! list serve](#) and read the earlier [reports](#)

Dear Neighbours;

As some of you may already know, Sterling Silver Development, owners of the Dover Square apartment complex (the three white high rise buildings bounded by Dovercourt, Hepbourne and Rusholme) has applied to the city for permission to build 187 new rental units — a 12-17 story terraced high rise building on the northeast section of the property facing Dovercourt and 17 townhouses on Rusholme Road and Hepbourne Streets. This project is not permitted under the present zoning.

A meeting was held at St Paul's Presbyterian church in April of this year, chaired by David MacKillop of the City of Toronto planning committee and outgoing City Councillor Mario Silva. At this meeting both the councillor and the residents expressed strong opposition to the development on the grounds that the site was already high density and that additional density was inappropriate for the neighbourhood. The additional density would eliminate much of the green space that is enjoyed by the Dover Square tenants.

The City is only required to inform residents within 120 metres of the proposed development of any public information meetings, which means that many residents have been left in the dark about this project. The neighbourhood has not been adequately warned of this proposal. The signs that have recently gone up on Dovercourt and Rusholme (but curiously not on Hepbourne) should have been posted last spring.

Newly elected councillor Adam Giambone is on record as being opposed to the additional density. The new mayor, David Miller has spoken strongly in favour of protecting neighbourhoods from unwanted development. The recently elected provincial Liberal government have promised to reform the Ontario Municipal Board, an unelected body which has a record of favouring developers over neighbourhoods. If you are concerned about this proposed development, I urge you to make your voices heard.

So Mel Quan — City of Toronto Planning — 392-1812 (quote file #: 102037,TC CMB20020017)
Adam Giambone — City Councillor — 537-4211
Tony Ruprecht — Member of Provincial Parliament — 535-3158

I would also intend to organize a neighbourhood meeting, possibly in conjunction with our newly elected councillor Adam Giambone. Your thoughts and input are encouraged.

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