

Superintendent James Dicks,
Fourteen Division,
Toronto Police Service,
150 Harrison St., Toronto, ON , M6J 2A4

Aug.22, 2005

Dear Superintendent Dicks,

I have been meaning to send you a copy of the July 2005 Dufferin Grove Park newsletter, which contains an article “The Police need our help.” Some of us in the neighbourhood are concerned that some of your newer officers are operating in a bubble – that they know less about the neighbourhood than they ought, and that this will interfere with their work. It can also have a negative affect on the neighbourhood, in this case, on the park.

A few days ago an incident at the park made me think that the problem is not getting better. A young man who often comes to the park was given two tickets (as well as spending some time in a cruiser). One of the tickets was for having an open bottle of alcohol but the other was for trespass – i.e. being in the park with an open bottle of alcohol. I enclose a photocopy of that ticket.

It was my impression, from many years of close collaboration with park staff, that City of Toronto Parks and Recreation needs to issue a trespass letter before a person can be given a ticket for trespass. Am I mistaken?

In addition, this appears to be another instance of the racial targeting that seems to be a fairly long-standing practice at the park. I believe the young man in question is on probation for an offense. (I don’t know the particulars.) Some other basketball regulars at the park have had close contact with the legal system for various offenses. However, when they behave well in the park and there is no complaint made against them, they ought to have the enjoyment of the park like other citizens. They are not garbage.

In this case, I’m told that your officers were looking for a person with a knife. They generally are. Approaching the regular group of black males who come to the park and checking them out seems to be a common response. Going fishing at the same time, for alcohol or whatever, is then fair game. As far as I know, when your officers come and do their i.d. checks in the park, these kinds of tickets are far more common than more serious charges being laid against persons in this group.

Since your officers don't talk to us much or share information, that's only my guess. Perhaps I'm wrong. I would therefore like to ask you for a record of all charges laid at Dufferin Grove Park in the past three years, and their outcomes. I am of course not interested in names, i.e. my question is not intended to invade anyone's privacy. Our group could ask this question through the City's Corporate Access and Privacy office, but I'm hoping that Mayor Miller's recent urging of all City departments to release public information directly, will make that unnecessary.

I would further like to invite you to visit the park and meet with a few park friends and park staff, to discuss our concerns. We are sure that your schedule is very full but we are hopeful that you will find the time for a practical and positive discussion. Our ultimate aims – a safe and friendly and *inclusive* park and neighbourhood – are surely the same as yours.

Sincerely,