

CELOS INFORMATION BULLETIN NUMBER 5:

POLICE OCCURENCE REPORTS AT DUFFERIN GROVE PARK

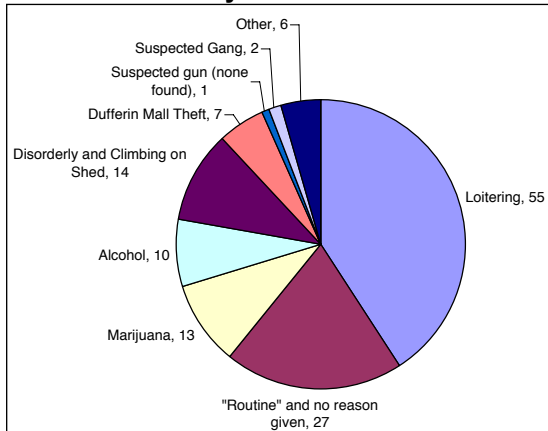
Fourteen Division Police officers have often said to park users and staff that Dufferin Grove Park is dangerous because of the level of criminal activity there. This seems surprising, but Fourteen Division management said that they are not permitted to give details. On September 20, 2005, CELOS therefore requested the following information through the **Freedom of Information Act**: (1) all Police Occurrence Reports relating to the park from January 2002 to October 2005; (2) all arrest reports from the park for the same period; and (3) all documented reports of citizen/police contacts in the park during the same period. It was understood that names and identifying details would be blanked out.

The police service has its own separate **Freedom of Information Unit**, which responded promptly. On December 5, 2005, CELOS received a package of photocopied reports, with all identifiers (even age and gender) blanked out. However, about 1/3 of the reports had been omitted. CELOS researchers, after making their analysis, realized that they needed the remaining reports, which they assumed covered all the youth stops. Their request was granted and on April 2, 2008, the remaining reports were sent to them.



This bulletin shows what the researchers learned: **the park is actually remarkable safe**. The three pie charts pictured here – one for youth, one for adults, and one for both groups together – show that (1) well over half of the reasons for police stops were for “loitering,” “routine,” or no reason given; (2) drinking alcohol in the park, which is legal all over Europe but not in North America, resulted in more than twice as many stops as smoking marijuana; (3) other reasons for occurrence reports ranged from “climbing on shed roof” (5) to “dog off leash” (1) to “fire-works” (2) to “associate of CRIPS gang loitering in park” to a suspected gun (none seems to have been found).

Police Occurrence Reports (135) at Dufferin Grove Park from January 2002 until October 2005: Youth



In a total of 364 occurrence sheets over almost 4 years, only 6 arrests are listed: 2 for possession of marijuana (under 30 gms.); 1 for shoplifting at Wal-mart; 1 labelled “*arrested weapons*,” without specifying the types; and two saying only “*arrest*,” without any details at all.

Omissions

During the period covered by the documents, there were some police visits to the park that were known to park users but incompletely documented in the records we received. Three instances of particular concern are:

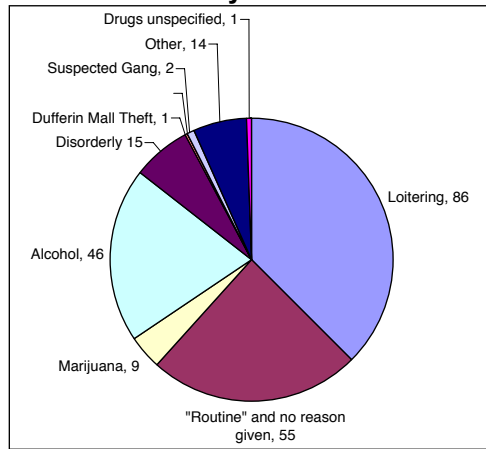
1. June 29, 2003: about a dozen park users witnessed a pit bull attack, slightly injuring two people including a city manager. The owner of two pit bulls was arrested and charged with various offenses including “dogs off leash” and “possession of a dangerous weapon” (i.e. intentionally releasing his pit bulls to intimidate other park users). There is no occurrence or arrest report for this date in the **Freedom of Information** documents.

2. November 7, 2003: a young woman in the park was arrested and taken away in handcuffs. The officer said there was a warrant out for her arrest for breach of probation. The woman’s 3-month-old baby was crying but the officer refused to let the woman breastfeed or take her baby along to 13 Division (the arrest warrant was from there). A park user, who asked police to let the baby be fed before the mother was taken away, was told that if she (the park user) spoke another word, she would be arrested and charged with obstruction.

It turned out that, although the young mother was indeed on probation, she had not breached her probation and there was no warrant – there had been a computer error. The woman was released shortly after her arrival at the station, and she was able to rejoin her baby.



Police Occurrence Reports (229) at Dufferin Grove Park from January 2002 until October 2005: Adult



3. September 5, 2005: Two City staff and four park users reported seeing police in Dufferin Grove Park with a rifle, questioning youth near the basketball court. There were four police cars, and the observers said that one officer had a rifle raised up a few meters away from the youth. After about 10 minutes, the officer holding the rifle put it away into the police car. Afterwards, police were reluctant to answer questions but one officer said that

1. they were following up a report from Brock Avenue, two blocks away, that a youth had been seen riding a bike and holding a gun
2. Dufferin Grove is a dangerous park
3. there had been a shooting in the park two months before, not released to media due to an ongoing investigation

The Occurrence report for that day simply says: "S/S" – subject stop – giving an officer's badge number. Also, there was no occurrence card or other report referring to any shooting in the park during this period.

CELOS has now contacted the Police Service Freedom of Information Unit with some follow-up questions:

Question 1: "Incomplete or missing reports: our examples seem to point to some omissions, and therefore our group is concerned that other reports may be incomplete as well. Could you let us know whether we should have been asking for a different form, in addition to the occurrence reports and arrest reports, to gain a more complete picture of police activity in the park?"

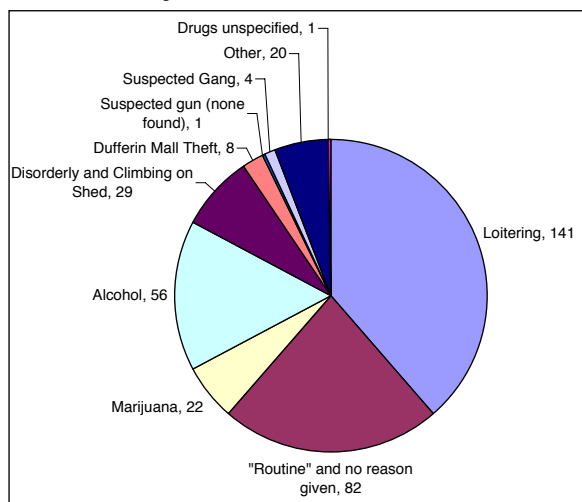
Question 2: "In the case of the mother with the young infant, an occurrence card, for Nov. 7, 2003, 10 pm, simply states **arrest**. Does this mean that a case of wrongful arrest is never documented, or is there another form we should have asked for?"

Question 3: "Does the absence of information about the drawn gun or rifle mean that instances involving their use are not documented? Or is there another form that we can obtain, with more detail of this event? Can we assume that the officer's comments about a previous shooting in the park can be discounted because

of the absence of an occurrence card?"



Police Occurrence Reports (364) at Dufferin Grove Park from January 2002 until October 2005: Youth and Adult



Breakdown of "other" category:

Fireworks 2; Potential sex offender 1; Prostitution 2; Nudity 1; Pro Driver 1; Suspected Gang 4; Drugs (not Marijuana) 1; Playing Guitar 2; Violent 1; Trespassing 3; Dogs off Leash 1; Skipping School 1; Unclassified arrests 2; Assault 2; Weapons 1.

Total arrests 6 (1 later reversed: computer error)

CELOS researchers will follow up on these questions, and also on the frequent use of "loitering" as a reason for questioning park users.

