

**From:** [Doucette Ward 13](#)  
**To:** [councilmeeting](#)  
**Cc:** [Councillor McKelvie](#); [Councillor Colle8](#); [Councillor Burnside](#); [Councillor Morley](#); [Councillor Perruzza](#); [Councillor Saxe](#); [Councillor Carroll](#); [Councillor Jaye Robinson](#); [Councillor Ainslie](#); [Councillor Mantas](#); [Councillor Moise](#); [Councillor Thompson](#); [Councillor Crisanti](#); [Councillor Holyday](#); [Councillor Perks](#); [Councillor Nunziata](#); [Councillor Pasternak](#); [Councillor Bravo](#); [Councillor Malik](#); [Councillor Matlow](#); [Councillor Fletcher](#); [Councillor Cheng](#); [Councillor Bradford](#); [Councillor Crawford](#); [Councillor Myers](#); [MayorTO](#); [Karpoche-CO, Bhutla](#); [Paul Farish](#)  
**Subject:** [External Sender] IE3.7 photos speak a thousand words  
**Date:** May 8, 2023 7:23:10 PM  
**Attachments:** [Photos speak a thousand words HP.pdf](#)

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Please find attached my letter for IE3.7

**I give permission for my letter to be made public.**

Thank you  
Sarah Doucette  
18 Durie St  
Ward 4

My family and I have lived in Swansea for over 30 years and have used many aspects of High Park during this time:

- High Park Zoo
- High Park Toronto FC – children soccer programs
- High Park Nature Centre – camps and family programs
- The Children’s Teaching Kitchen – programs and festivals
- Colborne Lodge – workshops and festivals
- High Park Walks – Sunday walk, have led some and participated in other
- The Labyrinth – to relax after a hectic week at City Hall
- Dream in the park – enjoyed the Shakespeare performances
- Native plant sales at the green houses
- Spring Run – flipped pancakes and at the start line
- Jamie Bell Playground – also known as the Castle Playground by locals
- My children used it while at a local high school for distant running
- To see the Cherry Blossoms
- The swimming pool
- The ice rink
- Family walks
- Many, probably hundreds of meals weekdays and weekends with family and friends at the Grenadier Restaurant – we had to drive my mother-in-law as she could not walk very far.

The FOI I requested shows that there were no concerns regarding accidents with cars in the park before the 2020 closure as was stated in the staff final report. The FOI results do indicate that the number of cyclists receiving tickets for not stopping at the stop signs did go up. So to say the park needs to be kept closed as it was unsafe is unfounded!

Photos speak a thousand words. Please see some at the end of my email.

I am able to walk or ride my bike to the park but many cannot. Since the park was closed on weekends in early 2020 many people have been unable to have access to this wonderful public park, the jewel of our city. When I fractured my ankle in 2021, I realised how restrictive these road closures are. To me it was just a temporary inconvenience but for many who can only use the park on weekends but need a vehicle this has now been going on for over three years.

This goes against the AODA where by 2025 the city is to be fully accessible to everyone by removing barriers and yet here each weekend barriers are being put up, literally. This whole initiative has put the cart before the horse. The accessible shuttles should be running, the infrastructure to slow all traffic, cars and cyclists, should be installed, a plan by TTC enhance their service through the park and High Park Subway station’s elevator should be installed before you even consider closing the park to vehicles and until then the park should be open seven days a week.

In 1873 John and Jemima Howard signed an agreement to convey High Park, their country property, to the City of Toronto to be maintained as public parkland for the free use of all the citizens of Toronto.

By closing the park this has affected many organizations who have called the park home long before any one had ever heard of COVID, this is not a complete list:

Canadian Stage – Dream in the Park  
Friends of High Park Zoo  
High Park Ball Hockey  
High Park Baseball  
High Park FC  
High Park Little League  
High Park Nature Centre  
High Park Off Leash Committee  
High Park Stewards  
Natural Environment Committee  
Park Watch  
Sunday Walking Tours

By Closing the park on weekends:

- Those with disabilities are excluded
- Seniors who want to access amenities in the middle of the park cannot
- Grandparents cannot watch their grandchildren play sports
- Visiting sports teams are not able to find parking, then the fields and lug in equipment
- Dog walkers have to off load and load their dogs onto busy streets, Bloor St. or Parkside Drive. They pay an annual fee and are limited to which parks they can use
- Local residents, where there is no paid parking, often cannot move their cars on weekends as they will not find parking even within a block of their home when they return. This is impossible for people with disabilities, seniors, those with young children and/or carrying groceries.
- More than half of High Park is designated an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) this is being damaged by:
  - Some people walking their dogs are letting them off leash as soon as they enter the park with these dogs running through the undergrowth and damaging the vegetation
  - People parking and then entering the park, particularly from the west side, are making their own trails and damaging the native plants some of which are either rare or near extinction
- People with allotments do not have access
- Should an emergency occur first responders have a hard time accessing the park

I believe that public parks are for everyone and right now with the park closed the city is being selective as to who has access. **Please open High Park seven days a week while the strategy #3 is being implemented.**

In closing I ask that you all take a look at the comments in the petition asking to re-open the park to vehicles, some of them are heartbreaking. There are over 3,500 signatures with 100% asking to re-open the park. I have included a few at the end of my email.

<https://www.change.org/p/keep-high-park-open-to-vehicles/c>

Thank you,

Sarah Doucette  
Resident of Swansea for over 30 years

Here are some photos that I have taken on weekends while in High Park during 2021 and 2023. You can see that the middle and south end of the park are almost empty!

Sunday, March 26, 2023



West Road

Maple Leaf Garden by Grenadier Pond



The Children's Teaching Kitchen just north of Colborne Lodge



March 2022



Cherry Hill

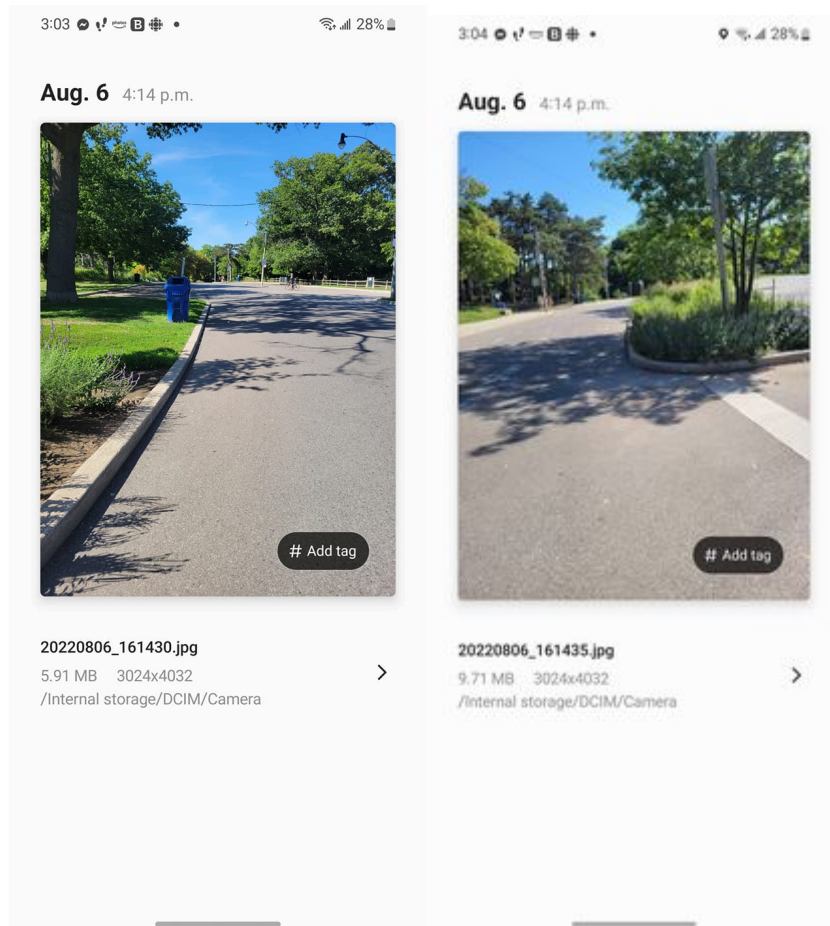


West Road



The Maple Leaf Gardens

These photos were posted on social media from Saturday, August 6, 2022



Saturday, July 17, 2021



### **One or two of the comments from the Petition:**

I have mobility challenges and walking or standing is a huge issue for me. If you close or restrict the parking, that would mean, that I would not be able to come and enjoy being there. That goes for everyone who is not fit enough to walk a few kilometers or bike. Are you saying you only want to favor fit people? Is it not supposed to be accessible for all? I want to come and spend time with my family there too, and if there was no parking, that choice would be taken away from me. Aren't All family members allowed in the park? You would be closing access to all people with disabilities that have mobility issues. Those, who can walk and bike will travel to the park on foot or bike anyway.

15 parking spots? Ridiculous!!! People will be fighting for them and linger around the park, maybe even lining up the night before.

It is the right political choice to keep all the parking spots, it is difficult at times to find a parking as it is. Just because someone one day had an idea, doesn't mean it was a good one.

Reconsider.

I care for someone with special needs, my sister. Without being able to drive into high park, I can't access the park like I used too before the pandemic. It's sad that Toronto keeps limiting access to places in favour of bikes and not taking into consideration people who have trouble walking and/or are seniors. I just want to be able to go to enjoy high park again with my sibling like I did before the city shut down access to the park.

I am signing because, as a resident living just a 10-minute drive away from the park, my family and I frequently visit High Park during the week after picking up our daughter from daycare. The convenience and safety of parking close to the playground on the north side of the park have always been a significant factor for us.

I am handicapped and find having to walk too far quite prohibitive. Being able to come in a ways and park then walk, helps to ensure a longer and far more enjoyable visit. For those who don't have this type of disability, I'm sure this is no issue for you. High Park should be for all of us.

As a High Park dog-walker, this affects all of the 50+ small businesses and the 600 clients they serve. There are no options suitable for all of us to safely take our dogs to other parks or to walk in from the road to this one. We need parking. Moreover, there is an accessibility issue for those who are not fully mobile and a danger issue with congestion at the entrances if so many people are coming in at once.

I do theatre. I also have a cane (long story) so if the park is closed that is no good for me. In the summer of 2022 I tried to figure out how to possible drive to High Park to support the Theatre but there were so many hazards. No 'tour de France' type cycling. I am not a TO resident so do not know about the 'deed of gift' of the park but I am in Toronto a lot so this concerns me. And yes, it is an 'able-ist' plan sadly. As noted by others "people with disabilities need access". I have a Province of Ontario Disabled