**Queer Ontario Challenges Toronto Police Service, 22 Division with Slew of Questions.**

Disheartening as it is to see the police (so soon after their so called ‘regret’ to our communities for the 1981 bath raids) engaging in the types of activities we are seeing at Marie Curtis Park, one cannot help but wonder about their motivation. The police claim that they are not targeting any community although news reports indicate 95 percent of those charged were men who have consensual sex with men (MSM). It would be interesting to know how many of the undercover police officers sent in to investigate and lay charges were female.

Police say they are only responding to complaints. Now Mississauga Councilor Jim Tovey’s, whose jurisdiction includes Marie Curtis Park is having a big rally to “take back the park.” From whom? Who took the park away from them in the first place? Are men, even men who have sex with men, not allowed to use a park as a meeting place? Are parks not a public place? Who gave the go ahead for ‘Project Marie”? How much funding went into carrying out this sweep? Why was this made a priority over other policing needs? What are the actual 89 charges against the 72 people arrested? Are these charges being lumped together as a smear tactic against men who engage in sexual activity in parks?

The LGBTQ communities have a long history of resisting attempts by the police who impose upon and/or restrict spaces we have created to address our needs. From raids on bathhouses and strip clubs to arrests in parks and washrooms, the police have used discretionary law enforcement to try to curtail the sexual activity of men who desire other men. It seems that the police are allowing themselves to be agents of the prurient prejudice of the complainants. Surely whatever minor inconveniences that might have disturbed other members of the community by the presence of these fellow citizens could easily have been addressed without requiring undercover officers laying charges. Could this be a reason they wanted “stealth” vehicles?

Black Lives Matter made a valid point when they disrupted the unveiling of a police mural. Clearly, much work remains to be done. Thank you to Marcus McCann and the other lawyers offering to defend those charged. We believe that standing up to bullying is important.