

## **Fight That Ticket**

What do you do when you get pulled over by the police and issued a ticket? If you are like most people you will curse your beastly bad luck (though not the beastly messenger if you want to stay out of further trouble or jail). Once you are done railing at the fates, you will write out a cheque for the amount shown on the ticket, pop it into the mail and then forget about it.

Unless they are retired and bored, working as an unpaid volunteer or making the minimum wage, most folks figure it probably isn't worth their while to take a day off work (maybe two or three by the time it is all done) to go down to court to fight it, especially if you were guilty as originally charged?

On the other hand, if you think the policeman was wrong, if there is a civil action that may result from a collision, if you are getting fairly close to the limit on points or if you are familiar with the way the provincial court system works (or in this sense, doesn't work) you may decide you want to dispute the charge. To do that you must prepare a dispute note as per the instructions on the back of the ticket and then make sure that it is sent to the address specified on the back of the ticket.

Then you wait...and wait...and wait... and, if you are lucky, sometimes they never get back to you.

In my personal experience, they usually don't get back to you about half of the time. I actually discovered this by accident. The first couple of tickets I disputed just because I felt I had a decent defence. I only ended up paying for one. After that I did it just because I am a sucker for a great bargain.

I think of it as though I were printing my own 50% off coupons (the dispute note). At more than \$100.00 for even the most minor of infractions, 50% off is a considerable saving.

The fact is that the criminal justice system is not really set up for the folks who fight the tickets. Its primary purpose is to deal with more serious matters. The vast majority of people just take their lumps. If everybody who got issued a ticket disputed it and required the crown to prove the alleged offence, the system would completely break down in no time at all. I would estimate that if everyone in the province who was issued a traffic ticket in one week disputed it, the last person would not get a trial date until ten years down the road.

Of course, not everyone is interested in this sort of thing so it isn't likely to happen in real life. And heaven help you if you are notified of the date for court and fail to show as you will then also be charged with failing to appear and will have parlayed your small fine into a major pain in the butt.

However, if you play your cards right, it might just work.