

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

September 12, 2001

To: Board of Health
From: Dr. Sheela V. Basrur, Medical Officer of Health
Subject: Late Night Entertainment Events

Purpose:

This report outlines information in regard to the usefulness of the City Protocol for Late Night Entertainment Events and reviews actions taken by Boards of Health in other municipalities with respect to such late night entertainment events.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no additional financial implications for Toronto Public Health stemming from this report. All required resources are covered within the 2001 Operating Budget.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

At its meeting held on August 1, 2, and 3, 2000, City Council adopted a report from the Medical Officer of Health outlining Drug Prevention and Harm Reduction strategies in regard to Raves. At that same meeting, City Council adopted a Protocol for Late Night Entertainment Event (Appendix 1).

At its meeting held on July 24, 25, and 26, 2001, City Council adopted a motion requesting that the Medical Officer of Health report to the Board of Health on: (1) the usefulness of the City Protocol with respect to late night entertainment events; (2) if there are areas of improvement within the jurisdiction of the City of Toronto (including the enhancement of drug education as recommended by the Coroner's Inquiry into the death of Alan Ho); and (3) a review of the actions taken by the Boards of Health in other municipalities with respect to late night entertainment events. Staff from Toronto Public Health consulted with members of the Toronto

Dance Safety Committee, members of the community, and other municipalities in order to prepare this report.

Comments:

The Protocol for Late Night Entertainment Events was the result of lengthy discussions between City staff, promoters of Raves, and people who go to Raves. These discussions occurred through the Toronto Dance Safety Committee. The Protocol incorporates strategies to reduce harm which may be associated with Raves. The Protocol is mandatory for events which occur on city property but is voluntary elsewhere.

Since adoption of the Protocol, the Toronto Safe Dance Committee has not continued to meet on a regular basis. As a result, some misunderstandings have likely developed and the Protocol has not been as effective as initially hoped. However, the protocol continues to be used for events on City property, although there has not been a significant use for events elsewhere. The predominant issue appears to be the cost of Paid Duty Officers (PDOs). Legislation which may enable the City to include requirements for licensing of such events has been requested, and may be included in the new Municipal Act expected this year.

Toronto Public Health entered into a formal partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to develop education tools on the use of “club drugs”, as recommended by the Coroner’s Inquest into the Death of Alan Ho. As a result of this partnership, a comprehensive public service campaign will begin on October 10, 2001. The campaign will feature a thirty second television public service announcement with a drug prevention and harm reduction message, a “ravestyle” card with specific information about the signs of overdose and what to do in that event, and a 1-800 number where callers can get information about “club drugs” and/or be able to speak to a counsellor about their specific situation. This unique campaign has also been supported by hospitals, film professionals, and the media through in-kind contributions. The campaign will be unique in North America.

In July 2000, Toronto Public Health organized an electronic network of health units across Ontario to share information about protocols and drug prevention/health promotion in regard to late night entertainment events. The network has an active membership and has promoted common approaches to these important issues. As a result, other municipalities are in the process of developing similar protocols based on the City of Toronto Protocol.

Conclusion:

Toronto Public Health has played an important role in drug prevention and harm reduction in regard to raves, as well as in attempting to assist with the implementation of the City Protocol on Late Night Entertainment Events. Toronto Public Health has also provided other municipalities with valuable information about protocols and drug prevention/harm reduction strategies.

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List of Attachments:

Appendix 1: Protocol for the Safe Operation of a Rave

Appendix 2: Jury Verdict and Recommendations
Inquest Touching the Death of Allen Ho

Appendix 1

TORONTO DANCE SAFETY COMMITTEE PROTOCOL FOR THE OPERATION OF SAFE DANCE EVENTS

1. Venue

Organizers will provide to the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division (MLS), Urban Planning and Development Services Department, a list of commonly-used venues. The Department will co-ordinate checks of these locations to ensure that they are appropriately zoned. This will be communicated to the operators.

For new venues, organizers will be required to submit to MLS details of any proposed location. MLS will undertake to check zoning, and the organizers will be advised of the results within two days of the date of notification.

Upon confirmation of appropriate zoning, the organizer must submit a report from an architect or engineer that the venue complies with applicable Building Code requirements. No report will be required for venues already legally zoned and used for Assembly Occupancies.

Fire Services will verify compliance and confirm occupant load.

Organizers are cautioned that they must build sufficient lead time into their own process to recognize that some locations submitted for review will not be appropriate for various reasons.

There will be a fee for individual venue review, in the order of \$125.00.

2. Density

The safe occupant load, as determined by the above noted review, will establish the “cap” on ticket sales. Organizers agree not to sell tickets or admit participants over the number allowed by the occupancy permit.

3. Water

Organizers will make arrangements so that patrons will have unrestricted access to a supply of running water, at no charge.

4. Toilets/Portolets

Organizers agree to provide toilets as per existing legislation.

5. Fresh Air

Organizers agree to provide adequate ventilation as per existing legislation.

6. Food

If food is served, it will be served as per existing legislation.

7. Smoking

No smoking as per existing legislation.

8. Security

One bonded and OPP licensed security for every entrance location (secure the site) and one for every 100 patrons.

9. Paid Duty Officers

As a guideline, for raves in excess of 500 patrons, there will be a minimum of two Paid Duty Officers (PDO's), and a ration of one per 500 patrons. Based on a review of the location and availability of private security, the commander of the appropriate police division may amend this guideline.

10. Ambulance Services

For raves with more than 1,000 patrons, the promoter will contract with Ambulance Services for the provision of paramedical services during peak hours (minimum four hours).

11. Drug/Health Education

All organizers will provide space for community-based drug and health education projects. The specific project to provide services will be at the discretion of the organizer. Organizers agree to donate a portion of profits to non-profit drug/health education projects of their choice. This contribution is not intended to replace adequate city funding of drug/health education projects.

12. Communications

Organizers will communicate to appropriate city authorities the confirmed location and the estimated maximum number of patrons for an event at least one week in advance of the event. This will, in turn, be communicated by MLS to the offices of those Ward Councilors who have requested such notification.

13. Definition of a Rave

A rave is a public, all ages, commercial electronic music event held in a special event venue attended by ticket or pass holders generally extending into hours when entertainment venues are usually closed.

14. Review of Requirements

These standards will be reviewed periodically. Such a review will include organizers of various-sized events, patrons, and other key stakeholders such as security companies, venue owners, and health projects and will include options such as licensing of rave organizations.

Appendix 2

JURY RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE DEATH OF ALLEN HO

We express sympathy to the family of Allen Ho and hope that our recommendations may be helpful in preventing further tragedies at raves and similar dance events.

The following recommendations are not presented in any particular order of priority.

Rationale: We the jury, agree that there is a need for safe venues for raves and severe restrictions on rave promoters will defeat the intent of these recommendations.

(1) We the jury recommend that the City of Toronto continue its collaborative efforts with all departments of the City, including Fire, police and ambulance services to ensure that all municipal bylaws and codes are met and if not, that the premises be closed prior to a rave event taking place.

(2) We the jury recommend that city-owned properties in Toronto as well as private venues be made available for raves subject to a licensing/permitting system based on the Toronto Dance Safety Committee Protocol and with adoption by all parties including the Toronto City Council. We further recommend that access to UNLIMITED DRINKING WATER at each venue must be part of this agreement to alleviate the effects of prolonged dancing and subsequent dehydration in some ravers in a warm or high temperature environment.

(3) We the jury recommend that the licensing/permitting system includes provisions restricting admission to raves to those aged 16 and over.

(4) We the jury recommend that the licensing/permitting system includes advertising guidelines for raves forbidding explicit or suggestive depiction of drugs and drug use.

(5) We the jury recommend that ticket agencies which contract to print and/or sell tickets for raves be required to indicate the following:

(a) the location of the event on each ticket. Failure to do so may indicate that they are condoning an illegal, underground event.

(b) the event as 'drug free' with information relating to searches and the consequences of the discovery of illicit drugs

(c) the minimum age of 16 admission.

(6) We the jury recommend the following policy on 'searches.'

(a) Search areas should be clearly indicated by either a sign or a poster which includes a warning that anyone found in possession of an illicit drug will not be admitted, will be removed from the premises and possibly arrested. Without exception, those found in possession of an illicit drug will be removed or refused admittance.

(b) Security guards working at raves should be specifically directed to refuse to admit and remove from the site any person found to be in possession of an alleged illicit drug.

(c) A pay duty uniform police officer should be stationed at the entry to any event holding a rave for the purpose of supervising the search procedure. This will ensure that any person who is alleged to have committed an indictable offence will be arrested and charged accordingly.

(7) We the jury recommend that the ratio of pay duty officers per patron at raves should be the subject of general regulatory guidelines. These guidelines should be flexible and allow for both an increase and decrease in the number of both uniform and undercover pay duty officers as warranted. As much as possible, the issue should be resolved by the local police service responsible for the area where a rave is to be held and the rave promoters and/or the property owners.

(8) We the jury recommend that the power to inspect and close a rave should be part of any legislation passed by the provincial government and any municipal government. The provisions set out in section 6 and 7 of the Raves Act 2000 should be used as a model for the power to close a rave party which poses a threat to public safety.

(9) We the jury encourage the Provincial Legislature to consult with all parties that may be affected by the passage of the Raves Act 2000 including the rave community, rave promoters and others who conduct business interests in this area, municipalities, law enforcement agencies, public health education officials, the Coroner's office and all other legitimately interested parties. Rationale: Evidence has been heard at this inquest that some youth of this province take illicit drugs and at different setting including raves. The drugs which appear most prevalent at raves include marijuana, ecstasy, GHB and ketamine but prevalence of drug use in all settings changes continuously. Therefore, it is very important to educate youth about the risks associated with these and other drugs.

(10) We the jury recommend that:

(a) public health departments throughout this province that work locally and regionally with all health care practitioners (especially those working in emergency departments), police, school boards and representatives of the youth at risk, develop educational strategies targeted at the drug use problem(s) present in the community.

(b) educational strategies in addition to "Just Say No" should include and support "Harm Reduction" as promoted by the Toronto Harm Reduction Task Force and the Toronto Rave Info Project (TRIP); the latter provides harm reduction information at raves by volunteers at booths approved and/or requested by the promoters.

(c) a \$.50 surtax be added to admission to raves, the proceeds of which shall be handed over to the rave community-based harm reduction projects. This is not intended to reduce or replace government funding for such programs.

(d) educational strategies for "ravers" take into account the unique situation of a rave party. They consist of long overnight hours, prolonged and energetic dancing, propensity for dehydration, high temperatures inside the venues and that some attendees will be exposed to and may take MDMA (ecstasy) or other party drugs.

(11) We the jury recommend that the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario consider the funding (or where some funding is provided consider increases in funding) for community groups such as the Toronto Harm Reduction Task Force and the Toronto Rave Info Project to facilitate their contact with, and increase their abilities to provide information to, youth at risk

(12) We the jury recommend that the City of Toronto with the Province of Ontario fund the creation of a video, a web site and other educational materials that will realistically portray the

risks of ecstasy and other party drugs – for use in schools and for the edification of parents and the community.

(13) We the jury recommend that this verdict including all recommendations be sent to the Minister of Education for the Province of Ontario. We the jury request that the minister forward the verdict to appropriate representatives in the school boards throughout his province so that they are aware of some of the drug related issues identified at this inquest. This may help with planning future curricula related to illicit drug use.

(14) We the jury recommend that:

(a) illicit drug use, as diagnosed by a physician, become a reportable disease so that public health departments can detect changing patterns of drug use. This information should respect the confidentiality and privacy of the patients.

(b) those working in hospitals and its emergency departments be informed of changes in pattern of drug use in the community.

(15) We the jury recommend that the Government of Canada re-establish and sufficiently fund Canada's Drug Awareness Strategy by providing training and materials to law enforcement agencies and education to all Canadians regarding the costs and effects of drugs in our society.

(16) We the jury recommend that Federal and/or Provincial funding be made available to police agencies in Ontario in order to train some police officers and DRE's (Drug Recognition Experts). These officers could then support frontline officers in establishing whether a person was under the influence of drugs, type of drug and the need for medical attention.

(17) We the jury recommend that judges involved in the administration of justice recognize the need for meaningful sentences to those who traffic to young people and are involved in the exploitation of the vulnerable most often at the profit of organized crime.

Rationale: Recognizing that certain illicit drugs are manufactured in clandestine laboratories in the province and that certain chemical precursors (substrates) would appear to have limited if any other purpose, i.e. (MDP2P)

(18) We the jury recommend that the Government of Canada through, Health Canada and the Minister of Justice, consult law enforcement agencies, public health departments, the Centre of Forensic Science and other stakeholders to consider amending the schedule of prohibited chemical precursors to include those substances which are a present and realistic concern in the illicit drug trade.

(19) We the jury recommend that the Chief Coroner for Ontario provide a progress report on the status of implementation of the recommendations approximately one year after the conclusion of this inquest.

It is the unanimous opinion of this jury that, as in our opening remarks expressing the need for safe rave venues, all of these recommendations are intended to foster safe, licensed raves.