

REPORT FOR ACTION

Nighttime Economy - Municipally Significant Designation

Date: January 21, 2025
To: The Board of Governors of Exhibition Place
From: Don Boyle, Chief Executive Officer
Wards: Ward 10 - Fort York - Spadina

SUMMARY

This report responds to the Board recommendation from report EP9.10 adopted at its meeting of April 25, 2024, where the Board directed staff to provide a letter of support to tenants and event organizers at Exhibition Place for events held between May 1 and September 30, 2024, to be considered as Municipally Significant to apply for a Special Occasion Permit or a temporary extension of premises and/or hours for the sale of alcohol at permanently licensed locations on a trial basis, and that staff report back to the Board with an update on the pilot.

Exhibition Place is Canada's most extensive entertainment venue, hosting more than 1,761 events and attracting more than 5.5 million visitors annually. This iconic entertainment, music, and events site is pivotal in Toronto's cultural and economic fabric, generating over \$594 million in annual economic impact. The grounds, with their multiple venues for sports teams, entertainment, music, and cultural events, are ideally situated to support the nighttime economy.

The 2024 trial was well received and there were no complaints. Staff recommend the continuation of the program in 2025 and on, thereon on an annual basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Executive Officer recommends that:

1. The Board continue to designate the events held from May to September at Exhibition Place listed in Attachment 1, on an annual basis starting in 2025, as Municipally Significant to apply for a temporary extension of operating hours to sell alcohol at licensed tenanted locations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

DECISION HISTORY

The Exhibition Place 2022-2026 Strategic Plan aims to exceed client and visitor expectations. Facilitating opportunities that support our tenants in expanding and enhancing event and entertainment opportunities will help us meet this goal.

At its July 16, 2019, meeting, Toronto City Council adopted a report from the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture outlining a comprehensive plan to “Strengthen Toronto’s Nighttime Economy.”

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.EC6.8>

At its December 7, 2021, meeting, the Executive Committee adopted item EX28.15 Framework for the Review of Licensing and Zoning Regulations for Restaurants, Bars, and Entertainment Venues. This framework identifies that current business licensing regimes and zoning regulations have not kept pace with the evolution of night culture, and a review of regulations for restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues would support Toronto's night economy.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.EX28.15>

At its meeting of April 25, 2024, The Board directed staff to provide a letter of support to tenants and event organizers at Exhibition Place for events held between May 1 and September 30, 2024, such as those specifically listed in the Report, to be considered as Municipally Significant to apply for a Special Occasion Permit or a temporary extension of premises and/or hours for the sale of alcohol at permanently licensed locations on a trial basis, and staff report back with an update on the pilot.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EP9.10>

COMMENTS

Toronto City Council adopted a report from the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture outlining a comprehensive plan to “Strengthen Toronto’s Nighttime Economy.”

“Nighttime Economy” describes the City’s social, cultural, and economic activities between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Nightlife refers to entertainment-related activities and is vital to the nighttime economy. It encompasses enjoying Toronto’s nightlife amenities and support for those who work at night, including individuals who help manage life at night, such as hospitality industry workers, bar owners, shift workers, and emergency services professionals. A healthy night economy supports all the needs of its residents and visitors.

A recommendation in the Council-approved report directed the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to identify emerging entertainment areas outside the downtown core that can support entertainment uses at night and the future growth of nightlife.

Since 2016, City Council has directed various studies and initiatives related to the City's night economy. These include supporting live music venues, eating establishments operating nightclubs, and identifying entertainment areas outside the downtown core.

To bolster and proactively plan for strengthening the nighttime economy, Council adopted the Toronto Nightlife Action Plan. This three-year plan takes a coordinated approach to outlining the scope of nightlife and has three recommended goals:

1. Toronto will support live music, entertainment, and social culture at night, which reflects the diversity of the city and enhances the global position of Toronto as a tourist destination and cultural innovator.
2. Toronto will recognize and advance the importance of safety for nightlife patrons and workers, respect for residents, and the long-term sustainability of music and entertainment venues.
3. Toronto is a 24-hour city that harnesses the potential of the entertainment-related nighttime economy as a producer of jobs and economic growth.

Further, the action plan recognizes that Toronto is home to many world-class festivals, events, professional sports teams, and music venues. Many of these events and amenities are located at Exhibition Place or within walking distance.

With our diversity and volume of municipally significant events, Exhibition Place can meet the recommendations of the Nightlife Action Plan, which will help enhance Toronto's global position as a tourist destination and cultural innovator. In consultation with the City's Economic Development and Culture staff, they advised that many actions required to initiate this trial do not require City approval.

An aspect of nightlife, music, and entertainment events is serving alcohol. The practice is for our tenants to apply to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario ("AGCO") for a temporary extension of hours permit. The tenant must also apply to the City for a municipal endorsement, called a 'Declaration of Municipal Significance.' This procedure will not change. In the past, well-known events like TIFF and PRIDE have been event partners for our Exhibition Place tenants. To successfully get a temporary extension of operating hours, establishments typically must demonstrate the event is deemed 'significant' by a relevant government authority. City endorsement through the local Councillor's office is therefore required. The Board's adoption of the recommendation is intended to support the process and strengthen the City's and Councillor's endorsement.

Tenants applying for a temporary extension of hours must comply with all other by-laws and regulations governing their businesses, including guidelines in the Good Neighbour

Guide for Late-Night Business.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-250434.pdf>

The Gardiner Expressway, Strachan, and Lake Shore are barriers isolating Exhibition Place from the surrounding neighbourhoods. Many residents call for the City to prevent nightlife activities from being close to residential areas, so this physical layout is advantageous for this economic activity.

Moreover, Toronto Police Services indicated that they would fully support the recommendation, given the organization's rich cultural history and the number of summer events. Exhibition Place's unique location away from the hustle and bustle of the Entertainment District and the fact that no issues with any tenants or nearby residents underpin their support.

In 2024, the Toronto Event Centre hosted three extended-hour events, each attracting approximately 1,000 guests. Because these events were held late, many patrons attended during the extended hours, reducing traffic and parking congestion. The tenant ensured security requirements were maintained throughout the events. The tenant has a venue alcohol policy that encourages and promotes Smart Serve Ontario training and guidelines, including drink monitoring, service supervision, certified first aid staff, security, and safe transportation. Neither Exhibition Place nor the tenant received any complaints about the extended hours.

CONTACT

Don Boyle, Chief Executive Officer, 416-263-3611, dboyle@explace.on.ca

Kelvin Seow, Chief People and Strategy Officer, 416-263-3111, kseow@explace.on.ca

SIGNATURE

Don Boyle
Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT 1

The events in our current 2025 summer schedule clearly support the Municipally Significant designation for tenant's events from May to September. The following is a list of events:

- Toronto Caribbean Carnival Related Events
- Ontario Honda Dealers Indy Toronto
- CNE Fair

- Toronto Waterfront Marathon Expo
- Mayfest Sporting Life 10K Post-Race Celebration
- Bike for Brain Health
- The Princess Margaret Ride to Conquer Cancer
- Under Armour 10K
- Toronto Festival of Beer
- Live Nation Concerts at Ontario Place
- Toronto Football Club Home Games
- Toronto Argonauts Home Games
- Toronto International Film Festival Related Events
- PRIDE Related Events