

SAVE OUR RAVES TORONTO

6,808 Torontonians United Against MM29.5 - Enhance Oversight of Special Occasion Permits for Non-Profit Organizations

April 22, 2025

Dear Toronto City Council,

The nightlife sector in Toronto has been facing challenges for many years. From the disappearance of venues, to the devastating effects of COVID-19, there are fewer and fewer opportunities for people to come together, dance, and maybe have a drink. These spaces are vital to creating an enjoyable city to live in, creating platforms for local emerging artists, and deepening community connections. They also contribute to the essential, multibillion dollar nightlife economy, which employs over [300,000 Torontonians](#).

Public Special Occasion Permits play a critical role in supporting the development of community-based events that contribute to Toronto's vitality and reputation as a cultural capital. Further restricting the ability of events to use SOPs will be detrimental to the cultural fabric of Toronto and further damage an already struggling industry.

Through the extensive [Night Economy Review](#) process, over 3,300 residents and key stakeholders were engaged to co-develop recommendations to better Toronto's nightlife. This report highlights how:

Particularly for small businesses and DIY ("do-it-yourself") event organizers, the high cost of renting space and producing events, the lack of available spaces, and lengthy licensing and permitting application processes are considered prohibitive barriers to the flourishing of creative communities and the ability of nightlife entrepreneurs to enter the sector.

The report goes on to discuss how:

Rave culture is "seen as more inclusive, more safe and more attractive for youth and for communities feeling unwelcome in the downtown "mainstream" nightlife, particularly for younger Indigenous, Black, and racialized participants.

The report also discusses the importance of DIY spaces and the “mobility of culture” for 2SLGBTQ+ Torontonians. As more event spaces are lost every year, increasing venue flexibility - another solution identified by the Night Economy Review - becomes more and more important.

Furthermore, given there is only one application stream for Public Special Occasion Permits, if successful this process change would result in undue burdens and delays for organizers of a wide variety of events - from art gallery openings to retirement parties.

We, as organizers, attendees, and supporters of some of Toronto’s most important nightlife events, know better than most that the current process is far from perfect. Sustainable, equitable solutions that move the City’s stated nightlife goals forward in an appropriate manner require due consideration.

We urge you to consider the negative impact this change will have on Toronto’s nightlife culture and economy. We urge you to consider the existing Night Economy Plans and to engage in proper consultation before requesting changes to the existing process.

We urge you to refer Councillor Moise’s motion to the Economic and Community Development Committee for proper consultation.

Sincerely,

Save Our Raves Toronto

On Behalf of 6,808 Concerned Residents