

July 14, 2026

RE: Securing the Safety of Festivals and Large Community Gatherings

Dear Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

Festivals and community gatherings are part of what makes a healthy and vibrant city. They are events where we come together to have fun, celebrate, support our local economy and create a sense of belonging.

Tragically, our city has been shaken by a senseless act of violence at the Salsa on St. Clair festival which killed two people, injured others, and traumatized an entire community and city.

We must be proactive in identifying potential threats and implementing evidence-based measures to intercept acts of violence. Toronto City Council has expanded youth violence prevention programs, hired more 911 operators to reduce call wait times, and are strengthening our front-line emergency response through the Toronto Police Service's multi-year hiring plan. These are important measures, but there is still more work to do to get guns off our streets and to make sure that festivals and events are safe for everyone.

The Toronto Police Service has identified opportunities to improve coordination in planning these kinds of large events. For example, Toronto successfully hosted six World Cup matches, which safely brought together tens of thousands of people from across the city and around the world. This was the result of a fully integrated safety strategy and collaboration across many City divisions and agencies.

This motion seeks to ensure that there are real security improvements and resources are deployed to prioritize everyone's safety at large public events. Ultimately, our goal should be for all our residents to be able to continue coming together to celebrate culture, sports and community, freely and peacefully, and know that everything has been done to ensure that they are in a safe and secure environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Economic and Community Development Committee request that the City Manager and General Manager, Economic Development and Culture include, as part of the next update on Toronto's Festival Strategy 2026 -2031, work to develop an approach to enhance the safety of festivals and large community gatherings, including:
 - a. Engaging with the Toronto Police Service, Toronto Paramedic Services, Toronto Fire Services, and Toronto Emergency Management regarding best practices for coordination, including conditions to be met for permits to be issued;



- b. Working with the Toronto Police Service to develop a risk-based event security framework that establishes security practices for festivals and large community gatherings based on threat assessments, expected attendance, venue characteristics, and current intelligence, while remaining scalable to the size and nature of the event;
- c. Conducting a jurisdictional scan of other global cities to identify best practices for securing large events; and,
- d. Working with festival organizers to address the costs associated with ensuring adequate security.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Matlow", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Josh Matlow
City Councillor
Toronto – St. Paul's

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Bravo", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alejandra Bravo
Chair, Economic and Community Development
Committee
City Councillor, Ward 9 – Davenport