



T O R O N T O
DANCE SAFETY
C O M M I T T E E

**RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE
REGULATION AND LICENSING OF RAVES**

JULY, 2000

Protecting and promoting health, safety, and well-being

Table of Contents

The Toronto Dance Safety Committee:

An Introduction	page 3
Perspective on Raves and Rave Communities	page 4

Recommendations Regarding the Regulation and Licensing of Rave Events

1) Promotion of safe rave events	page 5
2) Fair, reasonable, and equitable	page 6
Table 1: Sample Budget for an Average Rave Event	page 7
3) Access to safe venues	page 8
4) Access to water and ventilation	page 8
5) Drug education	page 9
6) Community involvement	page10

Appendices:

Appendix A: Membership of the Toronto Dance Safety Committee	page12
Appendix B: The Protocol for the Operation of Safe Dance Events	page13
Appendix C: Inquest Touching the Death of Allen Ho: Jury Verdict and Recommendations	page16
Appendix D: OD Card	page21

Contact the TDSC:

Kim Stanford, Chair; ph416-588-5054; f416-703-6190; tdsc@mail.com
168 Bathurst St. Toronto ON, M5V 2R4

The Toronto Dance Safety Committee:

An Introduction

The Toronto Dance Safety Committee (TDSC) formed in August, 1999 in response to Toronto's first rave-related death. The TDSC seeks to promote and protect the health, safety, and well-being of Toronto's Rave communities and members. The TDSC is comprised of ravers and rave organisers; community health organisations including the Queen West Community Health Center, the Toronto Raver Info Project, the AIDS Committee of Toronto, the Center for Mental Health and Addictions, and the Toronto Harm Reduction Task-force; research groups; representatives of Toronto Public Health and other city departments including the Drug Prevention Center, Municipal Licensing and Standards, Toronto Ambulance (and with participation from Toronto Police Services); and various Toronto City Councillors. (For a complete listing of participants, please see appendix A).

The TDSC has accomplished a great deal since its inception. By bringing together various city officials, community health organisations, and rave community members, the TDSC developed "The Protocol for the Operation of Safe Dance Events" presented to the City Rave Task Force on Dec 10, 1999, subsequently unanimously passed by Toronto City Council on Dec 15, 1999 (please see Appendix B for this protocol). The TDSC also received 'standing' and participated fully in the Provincial Coroner's Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho, May/June, 2000 (the inquest into raves and ecstasy). The recommendations arising from this inquest strongly support the TDSC position of fostering safe raves (please see Appendix C). Further, the TDSC actively supports community development and capacity building within Toronto's Rave communities, by, for example, supporting the PartyPeopleProject¹. The TDSC is also active in health education through, for example, its development of the "OD Card" (please see Appendix D), distributed through the Toronto Raver Info Project, the AIDS Committee of Toronto, and the Toronto Public Health Drug Prevention Center, and through its collaboration in the development of a public service announcement. Lastly, the TDSC is a participant in the Provincial Rave Group electronic discussion.

¹ From the PartyPeopleProject: "The PartyPeopleProject (PPP) is a youth-empowered association formed in response to the police, government and media targeting of rave and youth culture. PPP celebrates electronic music culture, promotes the health and well-being of community members and encourages public understanding of the beauty and diversity of the rave community. The membership of PPP includes partygoers, party organizers, DJs, artists, community based health projects, the business community and other interested people.

TDSC Perspective on Raves and Rave Communities

The TDSC recognises that electronic music culture has permeated society throughout Toronto and around the world. It has influenced everything from personal fashion to literature, design aesthetic, and even the music accompanying your evening news-cast and television commercials. Electronic musical talent originating in Southern Ontario is world renowned, and joins Canada's greatest cultural exports. The dance event community in Toronto is recognised as among the best in the world. The TDSC is aware that, in Toronto, this community includes tens of thousands of youth and adults from many backgrounds who attend for reasons of recreation, self-growth, cultural exploration, and belonging. Toronto's dance event community benefits the city of Toronto and Ontario through its hundreds of legitimate businesses and the youth employment created, through the tourism it attracts, and by increasing Toronto's global visibility through its artistic excellence.

As such, while the TDSC works to address particular safety issues within the rave community, the TDSC also understands 'rave' as an important venue for youth creative and cultural expression. Further, the TDSC acknowledges the economic impact Toronto's rave communities have for not only youth, but for Toronto and Ontario as a whole. This perspective was mirrored by the City of Detroit as it hosted the free, three day long Detroit Electronic Music Festival in order to celebrate the artistic, cultural and economic significance and contribution of rave culture. Lastly, the TDSC praises the non-violent ethic found within rave culture, noting that incidents of violence are almost non-existent throughout the twelve years of Toronto's rave history.

The TDSC acknowledges that illicit drugs, including ecstasy, are available and consumed at raves, as they are at other youth and adult recreational events. As illicit drug use is found throughout youth and adult society, the TDSC firmly believes that eliminating raves will not eliminate illicit drugs or drug related harms, specifically including "ecstasy-related" deaths². The TDSC strongly affirms, however, that *attempts* to eradicate raves and rave communities will force raves into unsafe and unsupervised venues, create a climate of fear of City authorities whereby ambulances may not be called when needed, and eliminate a vital opportunity to provide health and drug education to youth and young adults who may not otherwise access or receive it. Further, the TDSC acknowledges the willingness of ravers and rave organisers to address health and safety issues within their community, including their participation in the TDSC and their support of the Toronto Raver Info Project (a health education rave outreach project).

² For example, of the 13 "ecstasy-related" deaths presented at the Provincial Coroner's Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho, only 3 were connected in any way to raves. Further, of the four possible "ecstasy-related" deaths investigated subsequent to the Inquest, 3 (from the Victoria Day weekend) were connected to camping grounds, and 1 (from June 25) was club related, not rave related.

Recommendations Regarding the Regulation and Licensing of Rave Events

The TDSC acknowledges the need for governmental bodies to regulate rave events in some manner. As such, **the TDSC supports the regulation and licensing of rave events, but only if the following parameters are met:**

1) Regulation and/or Licensing of rave events must promote safe rave events rather than attempt to eliminate rave events, either directly or in effect.

The TDSC firmly believes that the elimination of rave events will not eliminate illicit drug use or drug related harms, specifically including ecstasy related deaths. The TDSC strongly affirms, however, that attempts to eliminate raves will force raves into unsafe and unsupervised venues (force ‘underground’ raves³), create a climate of fear of City authorities whereby ambulances may not be called when needed, and eliminate an opportunity to provide health and drug education to youth and young adults who might not otherwise access it.

Attempts to eliminate rave events include both direct attempts to outright prohibit rave events as well as ‘in effect’ attempts, including the adoption of licensing conditions that are too expensive or too difficult for rave promoters to reasonably achieve, and inequitable barriers to access of public and private venues. This was recognised by the Coroner’s Jury in the Provincial Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho; the recommendations were framed with:

“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.

...

“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.”

The TDSC is thus against any regulation and/or licensing that would have the effect of attempting to eliminate raves, as this too will force ‘underground’ and unsafe rave events.

³ That large underground raves are possible and likely within an anti-rave climate was demonstrated by the rave event on June 24 on Nugget Ave., attended by 7000, and unknown to police until 11pm.

2) Regulation and/or Licensing of rave events must be fair, reasonable, and equitable.

Regulation and/or licensing of rave events needs to be fair, reasonable, and equitable if it is to achieve the goal of fostering safe raves. This was recognised by the Coroner’s Jury in the Provincial Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho:

“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.”

Requiring a rave promoter to meet certain conditions in order to obtain a permit, but then withholding those requirements, would constitute *unfair* regulation. For example, a requirement that a rave promoter hire paid duty police officers when Police Services may be unable or unwilling to allow paid duty officers for hire (for a particular rave event or all rave events) is an unfair requirement. On the other hand, fair regulation and/or licensing of rave events would allow rave events to occur even if other agencies or groups are unable or unwilling to meet the conditions required for the licensing of a rave event (excluding safety concerns, of course).

Requiring a rave promoter to meet conditions that are too difficult or costly to achieve constitutes *unreasonable* regulation. To illustrate this, please view Table 1: “Sample Budget for an Average Rave Event”. It is a misconception that rave organisers are reaping huge profits in one night. The sample budget illustrates that an expected profit for a sold-out event with modest DJ expenditures is \$5508.30. It is important to note that this profit does not include a salary for the organiser for the three months spent planning and promoting the event – i.e. ‘profit’ is not for one night, but for months of labour before the actual event. The requirement, for example, for a rave organiser to hire 13 paid duty police officers (including staff sergeants) for this event would be expected to cost approximately \$9000.00 (including 15% police administration fee) and would thus be an unreasonable requirement given the budget of rave organisers. Requirements for privately paid ambulance, police, and other services must take into account the budget of rave organisers in order to be reasonable. Again, this was clearly recognised by the Coroner’s Jury in the Provincial Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho.

Equitable regulation and/or licensing of rave events would be regulation and/or licensing roughly equivalent to that of other entertainment and cultural events. For example, requirements for the rave community to privately hire ‘undercover’ police officers when other entertainment and cultural events are not required to do so is inequitable. Regulation that is equitable should not encounter a difficulty in defining a rave event as something different from other entertainment and cultural events, as there would be no need to isolate rave events for the purposes of legislation.

Table 1

Sample Budget for an Average Rave Event

Expenditures**Location: capacity of 2500**

Rent.....	\$15 000.00	
Damage deposit.....	\$ 2000.00	
Cleanup.....	\$ 1500.00	
Location Staff (AV tech and electrician)	\$ 810.00	
GST.....	\$ 1351.70	
Total		\$ 20 661.70

DJ's, International and Local
(can *easily* be more, includes flights and accommodations) **\$ 16 000.00**

Sound and Light Rental **\$ 7 000.00**

Decorations **\$ 1 000.00**

Promotion and Advertising (including flyers) **\$ 6 000.00**

Tickets
(printing and commissions) **\$ 1 850.00**

Security (37 guards) **\$ 5 800.00**

Shuttle Bus Service
(two buses, plus security on each and at pick-up site) **\$ 1 680.00**

Insurance **\$ 2 000.00**

Total Expenditures: **\$61 991.70**

(*note* this does not include salary for rave organiser or paid duty police or ambulance services)

Revenue:

Ticket Sales	
1500 pre-sales at \$25.00 each	\$37 500.00
1000 at the door at \$30.00 each	\$30 000.00

Total Revenue **\$67 500.00**

Profit **\$ 5 508.30**

(*we invite you to compare this to the budget for other large music and entertainment events)

3) Regulation and/or Licensing of rave events must specifically support access to safe and properly zoned venues.

If regulation of rave events requires (as it should) that raves be held in safe and properly zoned venues, yet authorities are working to ensure such public and private venues are not available to the rave community, then this youth community has no choice other than unsafe spaces. The TDSC affirms that policy makers, as well as the actual regulatory and/or licensing schemes themselves, must specifically support the rave community's access to safe and properly zoned venues. For example, regulation of rave events could mandate an official committee to identify a list of suitable venues for rave events, both public and private.

The need for safe venues was specifically noted by the Coroner's Jury in the Provincial Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho; the recommendations were framed with:

“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.

...

“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.”

Further, Inquest Jury recommendation 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...”

4) Regulation and/or Licensing of rave events must specifically include requirements for unlimited access to free running water and adequate ventilation.

The TDSC encourages all policy makers to use the Protocol for the Operation of Safe Dance Events (please see Appendix B) as the basis of any regulatory and/or licensing scheme. This protocol was developed with the involvement of ravers and rave organisers; public and community health professionals; police officers, representatives from licensing and standards, fire, and ambulance; academics; and politicians. All of these parties contributed to the protocol, and all also made some compromise in reaching consensus. The Coroner's Jury in the Provincial Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho specifically recommends that a licensing/permitting scheme be based upon the protocol.

This protocol outlines the basic requirements for a safe rave event. Specifically, as the most common cause of rave related mortality and morbidity worldwide is hyperthermia (overheating), the TDSC requires that, at the bare minimum,

requirements for unlimited access to free running water and adequate ventilation must be included in any regulation and/or licensing of rave events. The need for access to water was recognised by the Coroner’s Jury in the Provincial Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho in recommendation 2): “...We further recommend that access to UNLIMITED DRINKING WATER at each venue must be part of this agreement [licensing/permitting system based on the Toronto Dance Safety Committee Protocol – emphasis original].

5) Regulation and/or Licensing of rave events must support drug education as a means to address drug misuse.

The TDSC recognises that illicit drugs, including ecstasy, are available and consumed at raves (as they are at other youth and adult recreational events), and that there has been significant drug-related harm associated with raves, including overdose death (as there has been at other youth and adult recreational events)⁴. The TDSC thus believes that efforts to promote the health, safety, and well-being of rave communities and members must therefor also address drug-related harm. The TDSC recognises ‘harm reduction’ as a compatible and necessary complement for efforts aimed towards the elimination of drug use, for while abstentionist approaches are necessary, they are not entirely successful.⁵ Therefor, strategies that seek to minimise drug related harms are also necessary for drug users who are unable or unwilling to stop their use. This by no means condones drug use, but prioritises health and safety.

The TDSC therefor recommends specific and financial support for drug education, including harm reduction, to be provided at raves. This was recognised by the Coroner’s Jury of the Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho:

“We the jury recommend that:

...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 booth approved and/or requested by the promoters.”

⁴ Drug related harm and overdose is by no means limited to rave, but is a broader societal issue. For example, a recent report from St. Michael’s Hospital Emergency Department indicated they were treating more (and were more concerned about) GHB overdoses coming from clubs than Ecstasy overdoses.

⁵ Regardless of the amount of resources spent trying to eliminate drug use, through both law and order approaches and abstentionist drug education, a certain percentage continue to utilise illicit drugs.

6) Regulation and/or Licensing of rave events must be drafted and developed with the meaningful input of ravers and rave organisers.

The TDSC believes good policy making involves all those who will be affected. As such, the TDSC firmly encourages policy makers to involve the rave community in the drafting and development of any regulatory or licensing scheme. This involvement must be meaningful and begin as the drafting of policy begins.

The TDSC recognises that rave community takes the health and safety of its members seriously, noting that ravers have consistently acted to address issues within their community. For example, with the support of Toronto Public Health, members of the rave community were the first to organise an intervention (the creation of the TDSC and drafting of the protocol) immediately following the first rave related death in Toronto in August, 1999. The TDSC is aware that members of this community continue to be eager to collaborate on policy initiatives. Moreover, the TDSC believes that involvement of the rave community in the drafting of any policy will help ensure that any regulatory or licensing scheme will indeed have the effect of promoting safe raves. In other words, involving the community should help policy makers achieve their goals as well. This was recognised by the Coroner's Jury of the Inquest touching the death of Allen Ho:

“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...”

In sum, these recommendations regarding the regulation and/or licensing of rave events are intended to foster safe raves, to prevent rave-related mortality and morbidity, and to protect and promote the health, safety, and well-being of Toronto's rave communities and members.

Contact the TDSC:

Kim Stanford, Chair; ph416-588-5054; f416-703-6190; tdsc@mail.com
168 Bathurst St. Toronto ON, M5V 2R4

Appendices

A: Membership of the Toronto Dance Safety Committee

B: Protocol for the Operation of Safe Dance Events

**C: Inquest Touching the Death of Allen Ho:
Jury Verdict and Recommendations**

D: OD Card

Appendix A

Participants in the Toronto Dance Safety Committee

Alex D	Tribe Magazine
Bob Gallagher	Councillor Olivia Chow's office
Chris Samojlenko	Hullabaloo Promotions
David Miller	Toronto City Council
Frances Nunziata	Toronto City Council
George Bartlett	Legal Services, City of Toronto
George Hatiras	Liquid Adrenaline
Graham Gerrell	Councillor Frances Nunziata's office
Humberto Carolo	AIDS Committee of Toronto
Jacques Chamberland	Rave Community Member
	PartyPeopleProject
James Murray	AIDS Committee of Toronto
Joe Pantalone	Toronto City Council
Joyce Bernstein	Toronto Public Health
Kim Stanford, Chair	Queen West Community Health Center
Kellie Leclerc	University of Toronto
Lee Zaslofsky	AIDS Committee of Toronto
Micheal Fay	Toronto Public Health
Neil Evans	Toronto Public Health
	Drug Prevention Center
Olivia Chow	Toronto City Council
Rob Lisi	Lifeforce Industries
Ronnie Ferszt	Most Wanted Entertainment
Ryan Baker	E-mail Productions
Sandra Bussin	Toronto City Council
Sandy Watters	Toronto Raver Info Project,
	Queen West Community Health Center
Sarah Wayne	Rave Community Member
Shannon Ryan	Councillor Chow's office
Shawn Parsons	High Profile Security
Steve Meredith	Center for Mental Health and Addictions;
	Toronto Harm Reduction Taskforce
Tyler Cho	Lifeforce Industries
Will Chang	Rave Community Member
	PartyPeopleProject

Appendix D

Overdose Prevention Card

(Collaboration between TDSC, Drug Prevention Center, TRIP and ACT)