



City to clean up after Pride festivities

TheStar.com - GTA

June 23, 2009

Emily Mathieu

Staff Reporter

Toronto's Pride committee is confident that a citywide garbage strike will not turn the world-renowned festival into a mess.

"At this point everything that is planned is going ahead," said Tracey Sandilands, executive director for Gay Pride. "We don't expect anything to be affected."

Traditionally, Pride takes care of the trash generated during the weeklong festivities and city workers clean up at the end.

Last week, Sandilands told the *Star* if city workers were not available Pride was prepared to pay up to \$20,000, to clean up the trash.

"The city has assured us that they have a contingency plan," she said. "We are staying out of it." Sandilands said more than one and a half million people attended Pride last year and she expects the same this year.

City spokesperson Rob Andrusevich said: "We are going to work with all major special events to ensure they go forward," but are examining them on a case-by-case basis.

At midnight yesterday close to 30,000 municipal workers, including city funded day care employees and garbage collectors, went on strike.

Yesterday, a planned flag raising ceremony to kick off Pride, with Mayor David Miller, was cancelled because it was in the civic square.

David Wootton is the manager of the Church Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area, which represents 123 businesses on Church St.

Wootton said: "We would hope if the city does in fact come up with a clean-up plan for Pride that will include for all garbage on the street."

He said many area business use private contractors – to remove organic waste and recycling – but smaller stores do not have that option.

Visitors interested in a more personal celebration of Pride, getting married, might have to be patient.

City Hall will be issuing marriage licences and will be taking bookings for weddings, though closures at the Scarborough, East York and York civic centres may mean a wait.

"We are telling our clients that it may take a little bit longer," said Katherine Parris, wedding coordinator with I Do in Toronto. But she doesn't expect her clients from California, New York and Ohio, will be phased.

"They are so happy to be here and get married and enjoy pride."

Pride isn't the only big summer event happening this week.

The TD Canada Trust Toronto Jazz Festival starts on Friday and runs until July 5. City workers were protesting at the site of the festival, Nathan Phillips Square, but executive director Patrick Taylor said in a release: "The Festival is a self-contained event, run independently from the City. It is business as usual for the TD Canada Trust Toronto Jazz Festival and we are looking forward to kicking off summer for our 23rd consecutive year."

- *With files from Vanessa Lu*