

TO: Community and Protective Services Committee  
FROM: Becca Amendola  
RE: 5th Meeting of the CPSC, March 18, 2024, Item 4 (4.1b) on the Agenda - B. Jones,  
President, Rock the Park Music Festival

I am writing this letter to bring to councilor's attention the questionable profiteering practices of the Jones Entertainment Group and how they operate their summer music festival WITHOUT reasonable access to water.

I have been to this festival twice. Once, back in 2011 and more recently in 2022. The biggest difference I noticed between those two shows was that I was allowed to have a water bottle at the 2011 show, but I was blocked from bringing one into the 2022 show. I protested that water was an essential factor in my mental health care. Without regular water to sip when my anxiety is high, I could move into a panic attack very quickly. When I mentioned my need was due to a disability, they mentioned that the thirst stations were set up (note: there were only two and they were particularly difficult to locate). When I asked if I could get a cup to hold the water they told me I was welcome to ask one of the vendors. When I went to a vendor to get a cup they told me they were EXPLICITLY instructed not to give out any free cups AT ALL, FOR ANY REASON. Thus, no accommodations were made despite the requirements laid out under the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act).

I was told that bottles were not allowed due to 'security' concerns, but if you review this article about Councilor Trosow demanding that they add thirst stations (no, they didn't implement them on their own, they had to be told), they mention that their focus is actually profits (they claim it's to fundraise for charities but we all know they get a portion of those proceeds too):

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8965861/rock-the-park-water-refills/>

I recognize that the article also states that water provision is at the discretion of the provider, and not something the city regulates. But I am bringing this genuinely concerning human rights issue to the council's attention because the request for an additional day to be added to the event is an opportunity to entice this business to be more compassionate to people with disabilities and medical needs for water.

It is not reasonable to demand that a customer pay something as excessive as \$5 for a single bottle of water while also pumping out alcohol to customers like it's going out of style.

Many Londoners were incredibly unhappy with this policy, as evidenced in these two additional articles about the matter:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/it-s-offputting-attendees-at-rock-the-park-frustrated-at-miscommunication-about-water-refill-stations-1.6521313>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/rocks-the-park-london-1.6505419>

I, for one, have pledged to never pay for another Jones Entertainment event again because of how egregious this violation felt against my basic human right to access water. This is not just a

matter of discrimination against people with disabilities. It is discrimination against the poor as well because \$5 is no small amount to people who have so little.

I am very low-income, but I enjoy music like anyone else. I should be allowed to buy a ticket to a concert and access water from a tap at that concert that can be held in a container WITHOUT having to pay additional money. Why should I be cut off from enjoying music because I can't also afford to pay additional fees for water I could have otherwise brought in with me? If they want to insist water bottles are security concerns due to using them as weapons, fine. But in that case, they should allow vendors to hand out free cups.

Many Londoners are not happy with the current policy that both bans water bottles AND bans vendors from giving out free cups. One of these policies has to change in order to address these issues of discrimination. So with this, I hope councilors will be kind enough to give this matter consideration and encourage the President to change the festival's policies on water bottles and/or free cups from vendors before deciding to approve the additional date for the festival.

Thank you for your time and consideration.