



STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

Residents of Ward's and Algonquin islands have made numerous complaints about noise from the Docks' nightclub in the port lands.

No club is an island, council decides

**Neighbours cite
noise 'torture'**

**Bid to slow licence
irks Docks owner**

KERRY GILLESPIE
CITY HALL BUREAU CHIEF

When Toronto councillors decided to oppose the Docks nightclub's liquor licence renewal, they didn't know what they were doing, says Jerry Sprackman.

Councillors fire back that *Sprackman, who operates the massive waterfront entertainment complex, has little regard for the city's laws — particularly the noise bylaw.*

It is the latest round in a battle between the city and the Docks, an 8.4-hectare complex on the water's edge at Polson St. in the city's portlands.

On the islands, where many of the complaints about the Docks originate, residents say there are times when noise from the club feels like "torture."

It was relatively quiet when the Star visited Ward's Island Saturday night; a bass beat from the Docks was faint but clearly audible. "This is nothing, if this is all you could hear, there wouldn't be an issue," said Deborah French, who has lived on the island on and off for 43 years.



Jerry Sprackman, owner of the Docks, says council's voting was flawed and "dishonest."

Residents live in dread of nights when the sound of a DJ yelling "Are you having a good time!" over the mike whips clubbers into a frenzy, French said. "You wake up with the bass beat pounding like it's inside your chest."

"You shouldn't have to live your life like that."

At its June meeting, city councillors voted to tell the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario that the city "opposes any renewal and/or expansion" of the Docks liquor licence, because it wasn't carrying on business "in accordance with the law and integrity and honesty."

The commission is reviewing the case and will decide this week whether the Docks will have to undergo a hearing be-

► Please see Docks, B7

No debate on Docks bid

► Docks from B1

fore getting its liquor licence renewed for another three years.

"To smear our reputation like this, I am livid," Sprackman said.

"I'll tell you who doesn't run a good business, the city of Toronto, the way they vote on things. They don't know what the heck they're voting on," he said.

At the meeting, downtown councillor Pam McConnell stood up to ask council to approve item "J34," saying, "it's a liquor licence matter." It was approved without debate.

The Docks name wasn't mentioned and Sprackman — after speaking to several city councillors who say they didn't realize the seriousness of the vote — believes McConnell snuck the item through. "As far as I'm concerned, it is dishonest to the core," Sprackman said.

Not so, says McConnell (Ward 28, Toronto Centre-Rosedale).

Councillors were given copies of J34, which mentions the Docks in the first paragraph and what the city was doing.

Council can be hectic, with as many as 50 of these motions passing in a matter of minutes with little or no debate, but if councillors don't read their material before voting, that's not her problem, McConnell said.

It may seem harsh for the city to oppose a liquor licence for an establishment that attracts up to 10,000 people, but things aren't quite what they seem, said Councillor David Soknacki (Ward 43, Scarborough East).

"If council was under the impression the liquor licence board would get this letter and say 'Right, let's close him down,' I think there would have been some discussion," he said.

The liquor licence is one of the few ways the city has to make a club act neighbourly, he said. The city isn't trying to put the Docks out of business, it just wants a hearing before the liquor board where issues of non-compliance with the noise bylaw can be raised, he said.

Sprackman's anger doesn't end with the councillors. He's got plenty left for the islanders.

Most of the noise complaints against the Docks — which have led to two court cases already with several more pending — come from people who live on Ward's and Algonquin islands.

"Is the lake just for people on the island . . . or is it for the 5 million people who want to enjoy it in the summer? We're not living in Muskoka here," he said.

"When do we stop kowtowing to these people? Let's turn the island into a park for everybody

and relocate those people. If they're so unhappy."

Though Sprackman may find some of the islanders' residents unreasonable, the terms of the nightclub's liquor licence require it to obey the noise bylaw.

The bylaw says: "No person shall make, cause or permit noise or vibration at any time which is likely to disturb the quiet, peace, rest, enjoyment, comfort or convenience of the inhabitants of the city."

The Docks' history of noise bylaw charges is evidence it isn't following the rules, McConnell said. "You don't get to live in the neighbourhood and disturb the neighbours. That's not on. It's not on in Don Mills, it's not on in Rexdale, it's not on in downtown Toronto.

"Every human being has a right to sleep at night."

WITH FILES FROM TARANNUM KAMLANI