



PRIDE TORONTO

REUSE CASE STUDY

Overview

Pride Toronto - the largest Pride festival in North America, attracts an estimated three million visitors over multiple days in June for parades, a street festival and stage performances celebrating 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Pride invested in custom reusable cups with the help of local reuse service provider, Muuse.

The cups were used for all poured drinks starting with the outdoor Main Stage in 2023, and expanded to include the Wellesley Street stage in 2024. Learning from their first year, the Pride team worked closely with Muuse to cut cup losses in half and increase the return rate to an estimated 85% in 2024, avoiding 27,645 single-use cups over three days.

About the cups

Pride Toronto purchased polypropylene plastic cups in 2023 with additional cups purchased as needed to replace losses. There are no deposits or fees charged to customers. Customers consume their drinks in a restricted alcohol service area.

During Pride events, the cup collection, washing and restocking are performed by Muuse. Pride staff manage site cleaning and post-event waste sorting. Though not tracked directly, cleaning teams reported less waste and litter to manage in the areas with reusable cups.

The cups feature custom designs by a local artist, celebrating key themes of Pride and giving an opportunity to connect with the audience on shared values. The cups were a talking point, popular among attendees, with many asking about buying cups as souvenirs.



Cleaning teams reported less waste to manage and less time needed to manage litter in the areas with reusable cups.

Key learnings

Reusable cups can work in major outdoor events and festivals.

Pride Toronto	
Venue	Outdoor festival attendance of 3,000,000 Two outdoor stages with 10,000 capacity
Reuse Service	Muuse Canada
Return rate	85% in 2024 up from 70% in 2023
Prevented waste	27,645 single-use items 415 kg of waste in 2024

1. Custom cup designs enhanced the customer experience...

The attractive cups are popular, and the designs express shared values, enhancing the experience of participants. Custom designs provided sponsorship opportunities to offset the costs of cups and collection bins.

2. ...however custom designs can limit the environmental benefits and limit cost savings.

The custom cups create a souvenir effect, and losses in the first year were higher than hoped. In addition, the custom branding limits the potential uses of each cup. Organizers noted that a pool of generic cups that could be shared with other festivals would lower costs in the long term.



3. Despite the challenges of a large outdoor event, Pride and Muuse worked together to cut losses in half, and increase return rates in 2024.

In 2023, the cup return rate was approximately 70%, but after some improvements, the return rate increased to an estimated 85% in 2024. Key to the success was:

- **Increased Collection points:** More bins were purchased (30 added to the initial 10) to ensure they could be beside every waste and recycling bin and near the bar. These bins can be moved to where they're needed.
- **Increased, integrated promotion of reuse for attendees:** Messages about the reusable cups were shared on social media, written into host scripts to announce during the event, and additional signs were posted on site.
- **Engaged all staff in the reuse program efforts.** Site staff were given additional training to explain the cup system to customers as needed, and to reduce cup losses. For example, security staff reminded attendees not to take their cups when they left the restricted area.
- **Muuse staff increased their presence at the event** to monitor the bins, check for mis-sorted reusable cups and ensure smooth operations. Pride cleaning staff reported needing to spend less time at the areas with reusables than those with single-use.
- **Pride conducts a post-event hand-sorting of waste** to reduce contamination, increase recycling and lower the event's high waste costs. This sorting also helps recover mis-sorted reusable cups, reducing the cost of replacing cups.

Sources:

- Pride Toronto website: <https://www.pridetoronto.com/>
- Interview with Pride Toronto staff: Bobby MacPherson, Senior Director of Operations and Marvin Regalado, Operations & Logistics Manager
- Interview and information from Muuse Canada: Scott Morrison, General Manager and Sofiya Chorniy, Partnerships Manager
- Site visits and field documentation by TEA staff
- Photos courtesy of Muuse Canada, TEA staff

