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GTA

Doug Ford is in hot water over his daughter's stag and doe. Here's everything you need to know about these pre-wedding parties

The term stag and doe has been all over the news lately after it was revealed that land developers attended Premier Doug Ford's daughter's stag and doe last August.

By **Jacques Gallant** Courts and Justice Reporter

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION

A toonie toss. Blackjack. Being imprisoned by your friends in a fake jail cell.

Welcome to a stag and doe party, or a buck and doe party, or a Jack and Jill party, where these are just some of the games you may encounter — all in a bid to raise money for a soon-to-be-married couple.

You might also get to eat pig roast, buy some 50/50 tickets and maybe even walk away with a basket full of liquor as a raffle prize.

The term stag and doe has been all over the news lately after Global News revealed last week that land developers attended Premier Doug Ford's daughter's stag and doe last August at the Ford family home in Etobicoke. [As the Star has reported](#), developers who benefitted from provincial government land decisions also attended Ford's daughter's wedding last year.

Ford has described the developers as "personal friends," denying that anything improper was done amid public outcry. The integrity commissioner recently cleared Ford of any wrongdoing.

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But what really is a stag and doe anyway, and where does it come from?

They are all the rage primarily in rural Ontario, though it's unclear why they popped up there and are largely limited to this province. (Something similar in Manitoba is called a social.)

What is clear, however, is that a typical one is unlikely to resemble the Ford stag and doe, which one source told Global included requests for donations to the couple of up to \$1,000.

An entry ticket will usually cost around \$10 or \$15, but might be closer to \$40 or \$50 in a bigger city like Toronto, said Carrie Mifsud, owner of Jack Of All Spades, a Grimsby, Ont.-based games rental company that specializes in stag and doe essentials.

The purpose of the party is to raise funds for the couple. Games are a must, like the toonie toss, which involves trying to get the \$2 coin as close as possible to a prize, usually a bottle of alcohol.

Or having a jail cell, which Mifsud rents out, and involves someone putting down money to imprison another guest for a certain period of time. Only for that person to eventually get out and take revenge by paying to put their jailer in the cell.

"There was someone that did a mouse race, they made a little obstacle race for mice," she said.

Mifsud said she also used to rent a fish race game, where people would bet on which one would win, but it kept leaking so she no longer has it.

"I started in 2007, because at the time all my friends were getting married, and I realized there really wasn't a company that did this, that catered to stag and doe's," she said. "I started with a couple of things, and it just boomed and suddenly everyone was reaching out to me."

The event takes on a different name for a same-sex couple, like a stag and stag or jack and jack for a gay couple, Mifsud said. She said some couples will manage to just break even with their event, but others can make up to \$30,000.

Relatively inexpensive halls like legions will usually be rented to host the stag and doe, which will also typically include a DJ, finger food and booze. The atmosphere tends to be quite informal.

"Stag and does are more plentiful in rural communities. This makes sense due to there being less opportunities for entertainment in less densely populated areas," said Claire Stewart, author of "As Long As We Both Shall Eat: A History of Wedding Food and Feasts."

"In a rural community with long-term residents, traditions such as this are important. Brides and grooms may host a stag and doe because their parents had one too."

She explained in an email that many cultures have some kind of tradition to help a newlywed couple raise funds by pooling resources.

"Scottish Penny Weddings date at least as far back as the 1700s. Villagers and even passersby would pay an entrance fee to drink beer and play sporting games with profits going to the new couple," she wrote. "These particular events became so notorious for alcohol consumption and raucous behaviour that attempts were made to legislate (and tax) them."

Stewart said stag and doe's these days are also a way to invite people who may not be invited to the actual wedding, perhaps because the wedding itself will be small or it will be taking place outside the country.

“Or it is possible the event was advertised on social media and attendants are not required to know the happy couple at all,” she said. “This still offers community members a way to participate and offers a source of entertainment amid a happy occasion.”

McMaster University sociology professor Tina Fetner said nobody seems to really know the origin story of the stag and doe and its Ontario roots.

“It’s become like a little industry, there’s a whole ritualized element to it, it’s become part of the process of getting married,” she said.

“There are very few things so localized anymore in our age of social media. Things that become popular kind of take on a viral nature and everybody seems to be doing them – think gender reveal parties. Whereas stag and doe still seems to be very specific to Ontario and maybe Manitoba.”

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