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Rumours' nightclub needs \$40k by October to avoid Halifax queer space's closing

Queer venue owners say having dedicated spaces is required, no matter how many businesses are broadly queer friendly

By [Ally Bowes](#)

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Rumours owners, Jose Chiu and Gerald McCowan are seen at their Lower Water Street establishment in Halifax Tuesday September 2, 2026. As a result of financial pressure tightening they are at risk of having

to shut down. PHOTO BY TIM KROCHAK /The Chronicle Herald

on the community to help it avoid the same fate as other queer spaces.

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\$40,000 for first and last month’s rent to secure a new lease before their current one expires at the end of October.

“So basically, in two months, if we don’t come up with all that money, we’re going out of business,” McCowan told The Chronicle Herald.

McCowan said Rumours’ new lease would start in November and take baseline costs to \$18,000 per month, a total of \$432,000 over the next two years.

This is before factoring in costs like payroll, entertainment, equipment, DJs and other expenses, according to the statement.

“It’s just to get us through this right now so we can carry on and keep operating,” McCowan said, adding that without taking

out a high-interest loan, they wouldn't have the cash

from McCowan.

New location isn't in the cards

According to McCowan, moving to another location isn't realistic.

Over the past 10 months, McCowan and Chiu have been searching, but just getting an optimal location isn't the issue. McCowan said everything would have to be taken down and set up elsewhere, and the costs to build and stock what's needed for regular service.

"To move out of that spot, you can't just pick up a bar and move it."

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Rumours also has events scheduled throughout September and October with

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that profitable time.

“We would be losing tens of thousands, plus we would be shut down, too,” McCowan said.

A familiar loss for the community

For Halifax’s queer community, the uncertainty is not new. Spaces tailored to the city’s LGBTQ+ population often go through repeated cycles of opening and closing.

Operators of these spaces say the losses mean more than not having a place for a drink or dancing.

Terri Appleby, the owner of Stardust, remembers a time when she was younger and queer spaces were much easier to come by.

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long.”



Rumours owners, Jose Chiu and Gerald McCowan. As a result of financial pressure tightening they are at risk of having to shut down. PHOTO BY TIM KROCHAK

She said that during COVID, a lot of spaces shut down and left a gap for the next generation.

“I felt particularly sad for young folks who are maybe just at a time in their lives that they’re learning who they are, or are becoming more confident in who they are, and didn’t have those safe spaces to be themselves,” Appleby said.

Before owning Rumours, McCowan was a patron in his 20s when the bar first open in the '90s. He recalled it as somewhere queer people could feel safe. That was something he

wanted to maintain when he reopened it in 2021, making sure the space was welcoming

stories: “I’m so glad this place is here because now I can come out and be myself, and I never went out before.”

Diverse experiences for a diverse community

While Halifax has many businesses that welcome queer customers, Appleby said spaces that are friendly to queer people do not fill the need for spaces made specifically for queer people. Appleby said that in non-queer spaces, LGBTQ+ people can still feel the need to conceal or tone down personalities.

“There are still walls that queer folks put up in non-queer spaces or in mixed spaces that can come down in spaces that are specifically intended to serve them.”

But that doesn’t mean a single venue can reflect the needs of the whole community. Rumours, Stardust and Backlot are three prominent queer venues in the city, each offering a different experience that can appeal to a range of people.

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“We said in the beginning we want to be everything to everyone and we knew that was

different venues that offer different things.”

The delicate balance

Hospitality is already an industry that is financially challenging, especially when dealing with downtown rents and rising operating costs. It becomes even harder for queer-focused spaces that have smaller markets.

“Your target market is smaller just as soon as you open the doors,” Appleby said. “It’s an industry that you never know what’s going to come through the door when you unlock it, and that makes it super exciting but also really scary every day.”

At Stardust, Appleby has continued to maintain a \$5 cover but some prices have had to go up as costs rise.

“It’s a delicate balance every month, for sure,” she said.

The owners of Rumours know that and show it by how they compensate themselves. McCowan said Chiu works 40 hours each week operating the bar as well as

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managing social media and marketing, only
taking 20 hours of minimum wage McCowan

avoiding having to take out a loan, which
would make it harder for Rumours to
eventually relocate. However, McCowan said
they aren't looking for pity.

"We don't want sympathy," he said. "We're
not looking for a GoFundMe page to help out
Rumors forever."

For now, Rumours' doors remain open, with
events booked into the fall.

"I'm not ready to give up," McCowan said.
"I'm not that guy."



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