

[http://www.thestar.com/news/pridetoronto/2014/06/26/hundreds\\_of\\_couples\\_tie\\_knot\\_in\\_prides\\_mass\\_wedding.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/pridetoronto/2014/06/26/hundreds_of_couples_tie_knot_in_prides_mass_wedding.html)



## 115 couples tie knot in Pride's mass wedding

Cheerful mass wedding at Toronto's Casa Loma for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer couples.

Their love stories come from all over the world and now they are bound together in marriage and Toronto history.

One hundred and fifteen lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer couples were simultaneously married Thursday in a 230-person mass wedding as part of Toronto's World Pride celebrations.

On the grounds of Toronto's majestic Casa Loma, the red-carpet ceremony began almost like a bad joke: A priest, a rabbi, a Sikh, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a self-avowed "tree-hugger" walk into a tent. The result is the largest same-sex wedding in North America's history.

Those were just half of the faiths and cultures represented by the 12 presiding wedding officiants, who also included a First Nations representative and a non-devotional secularist.

But a joke this wasn't, as chief officiant Rev. John Joseph Mastandrea reminded those gathered of the violence and intolerance still directed at LGBTQ communities around the world.

His voice caught as he described his decision to wear a rainbow-coloured robe to the ceremony. "Today, I wear it in solidarity with the places in the world that cannot get married," he told the hundreds inside the tent and the many hundreds more gathered outside.



STEVE RUSSELL / TORONTO STAR [Order this photo](#)

Mareks Lindbergs and Felipe Mendes exchange vows as they get married at the Pride celebrations' mass wedding at Casa Loma on Thursday. In all, 115 same-sex couples tied the knot.

Toronto Deputy Mayor [Norm Kelly](#), who opened the service with some welcoming remarks, told the Star that the wedding represents a change in attitude for the city and its residents.

“This marks the transition between accepting differences to embracing them,” said Kelly. Mayor [Rob Ford](#) has previously denounced Pride festivities, protested the flying of the rainbow flag at city hall, and was caught on tape allegedly making homophobic comments. Kelly later okayed flying the Pride colours at city hall during the Sochi Olympics, a decision he compared with the decision to attend Thursday’s wedding.

“I thought that my conduct then was the right thing to do,” Kelly said. “And just as I believe that then, I believe that now.”