

MOTION

5. Enhancing COVID-19 Revenue Streams for Smaller Unlicensed Restaurants and Cafes via Temporary Liquor Licensing

At the Council meeting on May 26, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on May 27, 2020, in order to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Bligh

WHEREAS

1. COVID-19 has placed an unprecedented strain on the finances of Vancouver residents and business owners alike, and also on the City's finances;
2. To help reduce financial stress for residents and business, while also helping the City to maintain essential public services, Council recently approved a variety of measures to protect the public and position Vancouver for an eventual recovery. For example, on April 28, 2020, Council approved a delay in the 2020 payment deadline for both residential and commercial property taxes which will now be [on September 30, 2020](#);
3. Prior to the Council meeting on April 28, 2020, Council met to declare a State of Emergency in Vancouver in response to COVID-19 (on March 19, 2020). And on March 23, 2020, Council voted to give City of Vancouver staff the power to enforce orders under the City's State of Emergency bylaw, including the ability to prosecute breaches of emergency orders, and the ability to issue tickets, underscoring the serious impact of this disease on the people and economy of the city and its businesses;
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20200319/documents/spec20200319min.pdf>
4. It has been widely reported that Vancouver's vibrant and diverse restaurant sector has been particularly hard hit by COVID-19 due to closures ordered by the province. Many are fighting for their survival and have implemented various emergency strategies to sustain their hard hit businesses through this difficult time;
5. Recent feedback received by Council from Vancouver's BIAs relating to COVID-19 and the city's restaurant sector has included recommendations to expedite and otherwise reduce costs and barriers for permits and licensing of patios and takeaway food and a recommendation to allow smaller, unlicensed restaurants and cafes – which currently fall under the City's Limited Food Service designation – the ability to offer liquor sales to help them survive by means of an additional revenue stream;

6. Council will consider a motion recently brought forward by Councillor Kirby-Yung which seeks greater flexibility on the part of the City to make it easier for restaurants to open patios and offer open-air dining during the COVID-19 crisis, signalling Council's collective keen interest in securing the survival of the city's restaurant sector;
7. In 2013, the Province undertook the Liquor Policy Review, one of the largest public engagements in B.C.'s history focussed on bringing liquor laws into the 21st century. The Province's efforts to modernize liquor laws were focussed on increasing consumer choice, creating new opportunities for businesses, and enhancing public health and safety; <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/factsheet-modernized-liquor-laws-benefit-bc-consumers-and-businesses> [news.gov.bc.ca]
8. On June 14, 2017, Council adopted policy changes affecting businesses that serve and retail liquor in response to the Province's modernization of B.C.'s liquor laws. Three goals were set for the City liquor policy:
 - Protect health, safety, and community livability
 - Foster creativity, community connection, and local economy
 - Ensure regulatory framework is effective and efficient
9. In accordance with recent feedback received by Council from Vancouver's BIAs relating to COVID-19 and the city's restaurant sector, there is a large group of Vancouver businesses that serve food (under the Limited Food Service designation) that cannot currently sell liquor. By making appropriate and well-considered adjustments to the City's relevant liquor-related by-law(s), and associated regulations, in this time of COVID-19 it would provide smaller restaurants and cafes with the ability to offer liquor sales in addition to food and would invariably have an immediate positive effect on their small business revenue stream and support their survival during this time of COVID-19.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to explore by-law and licensing options on an urgent basis, including consultation with relevant stakeholders such as local BIAs, that would allow smaller unlicensed restaurants and cafes which serve food, and which currently fall under the City's Limited Food Service designation, to sell liquor (consistent with all related provincial legislation and regulations) in order to provide these small businesses with an additional source of revenue during this time of COVID-19;

FURTHER THAT staff report back on an urgent basis with recommendations accordingly to support the economic survival of this significant segment of Vancouver's wider restaurant and entertainment sector currently impacted by COVID-19.

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