

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

1. Targeted COVID Funding Program for Vancouver's Chinatown

Submitted by: Councillors Kirby-Yung and Fry

WHEREAS

1. COVID-19 has had significant negative economic impact including on small businesses and neighbourhoods across Vancouver (due to closure periods, physical distancing requirements and costs of additional cleaning and safety protocols). A full economic recovery from COVID-19 is expected to take some time, likely years;
2. Due to the coronavirus pandemic Vancouver's Chinatown, a community we all know and love and a federally designated National Historic Site, has been devastated economically;
3. Even as some areas of the economy contemplate and progress through safe re-opening and operations, Chinatown's legacy small businesses and arts organizations continue to face significant hardship as a result of the pandemic and remain closed, due in part to the drastic decrease in tourism traffic, both from international and local visitors. This has led to many of tourism-driven businesses closing, which in turn has led businesses catering to local clientele to also shutter;
4. If a lifeline is not forthcoming to support the historical area's culturally relevant, legacy small businesses and arts and culture organizations, many of these organizations will not survive the pandemic and will be lost forever, depriving the area of its living culture and eliminating the essence that is Chinatown—the very thing that draws visitors annually to this renowned cultural tourism destination;
5. The federal government has begun to roll out targeted support programs to specifically address similar situations for some of Vancouver's other tourism-based districts where current federal programs are insufficient or inapplicable. Recent announcements include \$2 million in funding for the [Vancouver Aquarium](#) and [\\$17 million for Granville Island](#). The Granville Island funding announcement equates the \$17 million to a year's worth of revenue from rent and parking and would allow all tenants at Granville Island to put off rent and operating expenses for a year, thus relieving financial pressure while businesses figure out how to re-open safely amidst a stark downturn in customer traffic. Like Granville Island, Chinatown is a tourist destination whose legacy small businesses rely heavily on tourism traffic;
6. Although federal programs such as CEWS, CECRA, and CEBA are available and have been designed with the best intentions to provide some relief for most communities, in Chinatown, these programs are either ineffective, inapplicable, or inaccessible. In the case of the wage subsidy, due to insufficient customer traffic to Chinatown, many

businesses cannot justify the retention of staff. Regarding the rental subsidy, private landlords have the unilateral authority to apply for the program, leaving tenants without recourse should the landlord decline to apply. At the same time, many non-private landlords such as is the case for government-owned property, do not qualify. Factor in language inaccessibility, and this creates a fundamentally untenable state for our community. Many legacy businesses in Chinatown are running towards the end of their rope as they struggle to pay rent. Many of these legacy family businesses are reaching the point of desperation as cash flow continues to be a major challenge despite the availability of these programs;

7. Vancouver's Chinatown, a National Historic site, is home to many unique cultural heritage assets and is working towards a potential application for a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. The basis of any application for a World Heritage Site designation hinges on the living cultural heritage that exists in Chinatown through its residents and its culturally relevant legacy business and arts organizations. It is the notes from a Cantonese opera, the delicacies of the herbal shops, the drumming of a lion dance ceremony, the varied dialects of the greengrocer hawkers, and the echoing of mahjong tiles. Without federal assistance, many of the organizations where this living cultural heritage exists are at extreme risk of not surviving the pandemic and being lost forever;
8. A broad number of groups have come together to advocate for a Federal targeted support program for Vancouver's Chinatown including the Vancouver Chinatown Legacy Stewardship Group, Vancouver Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, Chinese Cultural Centre of Vancouver, Chinatown Plaza Tenants Association, Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association and Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council ask the Mayor to write to the Prime Minister, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, M.P., Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and the Honourable Mary Ng, M.P. Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, to call for a Targeted COVID Funding Program for Vancouver's Chinatown to provide financial support for local, small businesses, and cultural and arts organizations (including legacy businesses that are an integral part of Chinatown's cultural heritage and those that are the key attractions for tourism and visitors) to assist in preserving this National Historic Site for generations to come, by providing funding similar to that given to the Granville Island district.

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