



BURLINGTON DOWNTOWN

Friday March 17th, 2023

Attn: Chair, Members of the Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility Committee

Chair,

The following is a letter of support for Report #PL-06-23, *City of Burlington Outdoor Patio Program* for 2023. As representatives from the Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA) are unable to attend the Statutory Public Meeting of Monday March 20th, 2023 we ask that this letter be added to the public record.

We ask that Committee (and subsequently City Council) approve City of Burlington By-law 2020.455 and City of Burlington By-law XX-2023

The BDBA's comments have been informed by our close liaison with the Executive Committee of the Burlington Restaurant Association.

The Outdoor Patio Program has been a priority initiative for the BDBA Board of Directors and its small business membership since its inception. The program was elevated in its significance as an important lifeline to restaurant operators Downtown during the COVID-19 pandemic and in subsequent years.

It emerged last year as a staple component of the outdoor dining experience across the Downtown and holds the promise of delivering the even greater value into this year. We view patio season 2023 as a **significant year of transition**. Council's decision to continue the prior years' Temporary Outdoor Patio Program is strong evidence that the program has merit as a key seasonal attraction for residents and visitors to the City.

The present report also lays the groundwork for more detailed discussions about the future of a Permanent Patio Program city-wide.

The staff report signals some key changes in the execution of the 2023 program.

Notably, the proposed extension of delegated authority to temporarily restrict the common law right of passage in Burlington Downtown to include on-street restaurant patios and retail uses. The BDBA applauds the inclusion of ground floor retailers in this program. Our learned experience in 2021 and 2022 is that there is an appetite from non-restaurateurs to consider the possibilities associated with an expanded commercial footprint during the summer.

The report is also correct in its observation that the Burlington Downtown Business Association is actively pursuing the installation of a centrally managed patio walkway system Downtown. Our investment in a professionally-installed pedestrian by-pass network in five strategic locations this season is expected to ease the financial burden on our small business operators. Similarly, we expect that these installations will elevate the aggregate “patio experience” for patrons by providing a safe and attractive alternative.

We look forward to working with City staff to ensure seamless and timely approvals and the issuance of a license agreement, to permit this walkway system for 2023.

The BDBA also supports the staff recommendation (Option 1-Tactical Approach) with regard to the proposed beautification of traffic barriers. We appreciate that the repurposing of orange water-filled traffic barriers, where they must be deployed as a safety measure, is not ideal. However, we recognize that 2023 is a **significant year of transition** and the BDBA will commit to working with City staff to guide an approach that will “soften” and better integrate the traffic barriers with the enhanced aesthetic we hope to deliver this season.

Finally, we recognize that that staff do not recommend utilizing MAT funding to support outdoor patio programming for the 2023 season. The BDBA acknowledges that this potential funding source may be premature for the purposes of the current season. As we engage discussions about a Permanent Patio Program, city wide, for the future we look forward to understanding the rationale for the recommendation that MAT funding “...presents concerns from a *Municipal Act*, compliance and equity perspective”.

The City’s continued advocacy to identify targeted financial supports for BIAs and sectors hardest hit by the pandemic is commendable. The case for small business supports spearheaded by Councillors Bentivegna and Kearns, in discussions with the Parliamentary Assistants to the Minister of Finance, is a positive step in the right direction.

These efforts, combined with a thorough review of the matching grant program for operators featured through the Café TO Property Improvement Plan, hold significant promise. We look forward to exploring these novel funding models in preparation for the launch of a Permanent Patio Program for Burlington in summer 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Dean".

Brian Dean, Executive Director
Burlington Downtown Business Association