

NOTICE OF MOTION**Safer Bars Program as Mandatory Municipal Licensing Requirement****Moved by:** Councillor Gord Perks _____**Seconded by:** Councillor Kyle Rae _____**SUMMARY:**

City Council approved the Toronto Drug Strategy (TDS) and its recommendations in December 2005. The TDS provides a comprehensive approach to alcohol and other drugs based on the integrated components of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement. One of the Toronto Drug Strategy 17 priority recommendations is to promote the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Safer Bars program to help prevent alcohol-related violence in licenced establishments. Progress on implementing the priority recommendations is detailed in the document entitled “The Toronto Drug Strategy: Status Report 2008,” which is available on the drug strategy’s website at www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy.

There is a strong link between alcohol and violence. Most people do not become aggressive when they drink and even those that do have this tendency will not be aggressive every time they drink. However, studies have shown that people who are heavy drinkers or who drink excessively and to intoxication are more likely to be aggressive. The impact of this behaviour is not only felt by staff and patrons in licenced establishments but also by the community as violent incidents spill out into local neighbourhoods or onto our streets and highways.

Much of our social drinking happens in licensed establishment such as restaurants, bars and clubs. As a result, staff in these establishments are well placed to both moderate and intervene with people whose drinking has gotten out of hand. CAMH has developed the Safer Bars program, which is an evidence-based initiative, to reduce customer aggression and violence in licenced drinking venues such as bars and clubs. The program consists of the following three components:

1. *Assessing and Reducing the Risks of Violence:* This easy, self-administered checklist enables a bar owner to determine how safe a bar is from a social and physical perspective. For example, physical layout of the bar, customer traffic flow, and policies and house rules to keep staff and customers safe. The checklist also contains a section for planning and monitoring changes in areas identified for improvement. The cost of the checklist is \$12.95.
2. *Do you know the law?* This free and easy-to-read booklet describes the legal and legislative environment that bars in Ontario must comply with to avoid the legal and financial implications of not keeping customers safe and out of harms way.
3. *Safer Bars training:* This targeted training increases the ability of bar and security staff to

work as a team to reduce the risk of customers becoming aggressive, violent or injured. The training is conducted by skilled, experienced trainers and is three hours in length. Each participant receives a certificate of completion, and up to 25 people can be trained at one time. Ideally, all staff and management are trained together. Key training areas covered include: understanding barroom aggression, assessing the situation, non-verbal techniques, responding to problem situations, and legal issues. The training (based on cost-recovery only) is \$710 plus applicable taxes.

The Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat has been working in partnership with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO), the Toronto Police Service, Toronto Public Health, the City's Community Safety Secretariat, and CAMH on a number of initiatives to promote Safer Bars in Toronto with a first focus in the Entertainment District. Initiatives include seminars for bar and club owners to raise their awareness about alcohol liability issues as well as how measures such as the Safer Bars program can minimize risk and prevent violence. Bar policy workshops have also been held on how to develop and enforce policies for bar staff and patrons. Participating owners, managers and security staff have rated these events highly indicating they will use the information presented and would recommend the workshops to other licenced establishments.

The Toronto Drug Strategy also recommended that consideration be given to including the Safer Bars program as a mandatory element of the municipal licensing requirements and advocating for the AGCO to do likewise. The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel has advocated with the AGCO to include the Safer Bars program as part of the authorized list of training programs that can be imposed as conditions on licenced establishments. The Panel is also requesting that Municipal Licensing and Standards Division be asked to report on the feasibility of including the CAMH Safer Bars program as a mandatory element of municipal licensing requirements, as one measure the City of Toronto can undertake to help reduce alcohol-related violence in licenced establishments, and to improve safety for the broader community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division be requested to report by March 2009 on the feasibility of including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Safer Bars training program as a mandatory element of municipal licensing requirements prior to issuing/renewing business licenses, as one measure the City of Toronto can undertake to help reduce alcohol-related violence in licenced establishments and improve community safety.

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