

**Deputation to the City of Toronto Licensing & Standards Committee  
Christine Connor, President, Unifor Local 414**

**April 18, 2017**

Good morning Councillors and city staff.

My name is Christine Connor and I'm the President of Unifor Local 414.

Our local union represents 14,000 workers, mostly in the retail and service sectors, right across southern Ontario.

Our members work in retail supermarkets, pharmacies as well as in food service, warehousing and other service-related industries.

Approximately two-thirds of our members work in the Greater Toronto Area, including under the Metro and Loblaws family of stores.

I'm pleased to be speaking with you here today on the staff report and recommendations for a review of the City's Holiday Shopping By-Law.

As you can imagine, this is an important issue that touches the lives of tens of thousands of workers in the city.

It's this By-Law that ensures many of them receive much-needed time off the job – time to spend with family – time for some guaranteed rest and enjoyment – on nine identified days of the year.

As you can imagine, it's difficult to plan a life when work schedules fluctuate week-to-week, when there are no set work hours, and when pay is well below average.

That's why our union spoke out strongly in opposition to a 2012 city proposal to weaken those protections.

This wrong-headed move would have effectively removed any guarantee of time off the job for well over 100,000 retail workers in the City.

I'm glad that our city councillors heard the concerns of workers, and took them to heart.

And I'm glad that, in the report that has been tabled, city staff has chosen not to fully re-open the By-Law and repeat this now-settled debate.

Our union looks forward to the upcoming consultation, to review and clarify the language of Chapter 510. We believe this is an important and necessary task for the city.

It is especially important in light of the recent court decision that granted Longo's supermarket an extraordinary exemption to open some stores on public holidays, since it sold "prepared meals."

There is no doubt in my mind that the spirit of the so-called "prepared meals" exemption was directly related to restaurants, pubs and other establishments in the hospitality industry. It was never intended for full service grocery stores who, by the way, have for decades sold some form of prepared and ready-to-eat food.

We hope that through this consultation, the language of Chapter 510 is clarified to better represent the full and original intent of the exemption.

Expanding the exemption to include any store that sells a sandwich and a salad would only undermine the intent of the By-Law, similar to what was proposed in 2012, only this time through the back-door. Unifor will not support such a move.

I must also say that just because there has been an historic exemption for restaurants under Chapter 510, does not suggest that Unifor endorses such a wholesale exemption.

In fact, there are tens of thousands of restaurant workers who find themselves in the same boat as retail workers.

Just because restaurant businesses, big or small, would rather choose whether to open their doors on public holidays or not doesn't mean that's the right policy for our city.

Hospitality workers voices need to be heard in this discussion, and I urge city staff to solicit their views.

Why does this matter?

...Not only because workers should have the right to rest and recharge on holidays, but also because the rights of workers to fair pay and scheduling on holidays are often poorly enforced.

Research from 2015 shows that public holiday infractions were among the top five most commonly reported in Ontario.

During a special "precarious work employment blitz" in 2015 – nearly one-quarter of violations involved holiday pay and scheduling.

Just because there are laws on the books that protect workers, doesn't mean they are enforced.

Further extending these By-Law exemptions without an associated push for greater enforcement of laws would only leave vulnerable workers more vulnerable.

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It is very important that, through this review, this Committee strikes the right balance in Chapter 510 – between consumer convenience and worker protections.

We also urge city staff to undertake this Chapter 510 review more as a refinement in social policy for Torontonians than an economic policy for businesses.

We look forward to participating in the discussion.

Thank you for your time.