

Dave Bryans, CEO, Ontario Convenience Stores Association

Holiday Shopping – Remarks

My name is Dave Bryans and I am the CEO of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our Association's perspective on the City's upcoming review of exemptions to the Holiday Shopping By-Law.

The Ontario convenience Stores Association represents the economic interests of over 6500 family run stores in Ontario with over 2,300 located in the City of Toronto. Our membership is made up of corporate chains, regional chains and independents. Our stores welcome over 725,000 Torontonians daily and we employ over 18,000 people in the city. We take great pride in being 'responsible community retailers' working with all levels of governments and are an integral part of every neighbourhood in Toronto.

In our province, there are nine provincially legislated statutory holidays a year. These holidays mandate that most businesses be closed. Recognizing these important dates, the Government of Ontario has enshrined these holidays through the Retail Business Holidays Act and provided select exemptions to some small businesses based on a thoughtful rationale.

We endorse the City of Toronto's decision to undertake public consultations with stakeholders, including small businesses and convenience stores as part of its review.

However, it is important that the City of Toronto keeps in mind the growing struggle of small business to compete in the era of the big box store.

Granting a wider exemption to other retailers could give supercentres a greater competitive advantage and would hurt Toronto's small businesses. In recent years, small businesses and convenience stores have ceded a growing market share and retail space to large stores as they encroach into more neighbourhoods.

This isn't isolated to small towns, where the opening of a supercentre or corporate pharmacy often means the shuttering of community stores. The increasing concentration of large retailers in already densely developed neighbourhoods has driven rents up to prices that small businesses can't afford.

Expanding an exemption to large stores will not only diminish small businesses' holiday sales but will effectively undermine the province's Retail Business Holidays Act. The OCSA believes it is important that the City of Toronto strikes a balance between convenient retail access and defending the City's small businesses.

The OCSA encourages this Committee to uphold the protections afforded to small businesses, like convenience stores and all family run small businesses in every community. We look forward to engaging in future consultations and working with the City of Toronto to ensure the ongoing sustainability of Toronto's small businesses.

We ask that the City of Toronto consider small business community retailers before making any decisions to amend the current Holiday Shopping by-law. We feel that by sustaining a Holiday Shopping retail environment that allows our stores to reinforce what makes them a net contributor to both the economic wellbeing of the City, and to the unique cultural and social quality of the neighbourhoods they operate

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in, our members will be provided an opportunity to succeed in an otherwise difficult market.

Amending the by-law would be another hit to a sector that has had to endure a number of recent government decisions that have threatened their viability, and a decision to respect our interests would be an appreciated action by the City and its government.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.