



City of Toronto Executive Committee
12th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

January 29, 2021

Dear Mayor Tory and Council,

As we begin 2021, the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic continue to present themselves and undoubtedly will shape our city, its policies and its planning for the foreseeable future. With Council considering CaféTO and CurbTO – Pandemic Response Programs at the upcoming meeting on February 2 and 3, we write to request a framework that remains in effect for 5 years.

The CaféTO program was undoubtedly a tremendous accomplishment for the City of Toronto this past year. Eataly was one of the more than 750 restaurants that benefited from this innovative approach to city planning, and for that we thank you.

Toronto, while firmly in its position as a cultural capital on the global stage, showed a different side of itself. We saw a city reminiscent of the world's great open-air markets, fuelled by diverse and dynamic communities. We saw a city showcasing new dining experiences to rival other cities where Eataly has opened its doors, such as Rome, Paris and New York City. Moreover, we saw firsthand how well it was received by the residents of Toronto, including our customers and staff.

With the success of the patio program in mind, we are reaching out to the City's Executive Committee to ask for support and partnership in building on CaféTO's achievements and allowing for multi-season patios under a formal, multi-year program.

The potential benefits of a such a framework are numerous, and directly address many Toronto stakeholders:

THE PEOPLE OF TORONTO

There were numerous benefactors to this summer's patio program, but perhaps none more grateful than the Torontonians we served for six months.

On a daily basis we would hear from customers who were overjoyed to see the city so alive, who were visiting Yorkville for the first time in years or who were given an opportunity to be with family in a safe environment. They were proud of Toronto for its fast action and its support of businesses big and small.

It's worth noting that this positive response echoing across the city was in reaction to a sea of short-term pop-up restaurants. Knowing that, it's easy to imagine how Torontonians would feel should the city make this a longer-term project. It would be a win-win.



THE RESTAURANT SECTOR

There are also the thousands of people who worked on the CaféTO patios. Our patio allowed us to bring back 50 employees temporarily who directly worked on the patio, either in a front of house or back of house role. There are numerous roles it positively impacted indirectly, including facilities, marketing and HR, not to mention the trickle-down effect to outside vendors through our supply chain. If we had a multi-year arrangement, at minimum it would mean 50 more permanent jobs created.

Such would be the case for other restaurateurs across the city. A multi-year agreement for would not only create jobs directly within those businesses, but also generate work with the contractors, designers and suppliers they would source.

THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

This past summer, the city's streets and sidewalks felt energized after a long spring. Block after block Toronto was buzzing day and night, its sidewalks and side streets animated with pedestrians. While restrictions still existed and were respected, it was a glimpse at what a recovery would entail and, fortunately, it made our neighbourhoods shine.

It was easy to imagine this past summer as a blueprint for a future Toronto, one where patios and cafés were gateways for Torontonians and tourists alike to discover entire neighbourhoods. A long-term strategy has the potential to create corridors that marry culture and commerce and showcase the best of Toronto.

In Bloor-Yorkville, temporary patios such as those at Eataly, Trattoria Nervosa and Planta joined mainstays such as Hemingway's, The Oxley and Alobar in being able to serve diners outside. It gave Torontonians more options, more variety, and more incentive to explore their own city. New corners of Bloor-Yorkville, including ours at Bay and Bloor, became culinary destinations and undoubtedly brought traffic to other businesses in the area, from coffee shops to clothing stores.

Across the city, these symbiotic ecosystems created through street-side dining helped breathe life back into each neighbourhood. Doing this year over year going forward would only serve to enhance this effect.

It is with these considerations in mind that we ask the City to partner with Toronto restaurants in their recovery by championing a longer-term approach to a multi-year patio initiative.

In addition to the positive impact on Toronto residents, hospitality workers and the city's neighbourhoods, as listed above, there are several practical reasons why a more established patio program for public land is worthwhile:



- Return on investment: the costs associated with temporary patios, including tent rentals, furniture, storage, and electrical are significant. The investment in a physical structure and infrastructure that would last for years is more financially prudent and essential to reach profitability for many patio operators.
- Operational efficiencies: the operations of a pop-up and those of an established outdoor restaurant differ greatly. The latter includes installation and strategic location of kitchens, storage, and access to facilities.
- Better customer experiences: restaurateurs, including Eataly, moved at lightning speed this summer to assemble patios and curbside cafés, and diners were not picky. However, with more time and planning, truly beautiful and inviting spaces would benefit all Torontonians.

Further to these points, and at a high level, a clear, multi-year plan for patios would create a degree of certainty for businesses in a time where uncertainty has prevailed.

The reality of COVID-19's impact is that patio season for the foreseeable future will play a pivotal role for restaurants in Toronto. This year especially, but for years to come as well, as we all seek every possible channel to recoup the losses we have seen.

Ultimately, the City and restaurateurs have the same goals: create jobs, stimulate the economy, design desirable spaces and reinforce Toronto as a leading, global city. A longer-term, City-supported strategy for multi-season patios would do exactly that.

Sincerely,

Nico Dagnino

Director of Store Operations
Eataly Toronto
Nico.Dagnino@Eataly.com
(301) 642-6682