

**From:** [Riverside BIA Office](#)  
**To:** [councilmeeting](#)  
**Cc:** [David Watson](#); [Councillor Fletcher](#); [David Nickle](#); [Korman & Co \(Office\)](#); [Jamie Zeldin](#)  
**Subject:** Riverside BIA comments for 2023.EX2.4 on February 7, 2023 City Council  
**Date:** February 6, 2023 9:04:46 AM

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To the City Clerk:

Please add our comments to the agenda for the for the February 7, 2023 City Council meeting on item 2023.EX2.4, CaféTO 2023 and Beyond

We understand that our comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, we understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and our names may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

*February 6, 2023*

To the City Council,

**Re: Working Together to Ensure the Continued Success of the CafeTO Program in Toronto**

We are writing you today on item 2023.EX2.4 as we understand the changes and modifications to the CafeTO program for 2023 are being reviewed and decided upon at Council.

The Riverside BIA which is along Queen Street East from Davies Avenue to just past De Grassi Street has been heavily invested in supporting the success of the CafeTO program for the past three years including significant in-kind staff time for coordination, hands on support, and cash and material investments. We are a small but active BIA and have had blocks of active patios within our compact 10-block stretch, and supported 15+ of our member restaurants, bars, and cafes each year in successful operations in partnership with the City CafeTO team. Mayor Tory and our Councillor Paula Fletcher launched the very first year of the program on the Eastbound Brewing Co patio in Riverside and we are very proud of the program's uptake and success to date.

We understand that the incoming changes for the 2023 CafeTO program for Curb Lane Cafes are proposed and wanted to share our comments based on our direct experience with the program:

1) **PLATFORMS:** Making full platforms a requirement as well as fencing, at the expense of the operator is a proposed change. A grant up to \$7,500 (\$15,000 cost-shared) may be available to support operators in this expense whether rented or owned. We appreciate and support the need for accessibility in the CafeTO program but want to emphasize these points of importance:

- **The City will need to put in place safeguards such as minimum notice periods and communications to operators when construction or repair work to be done in the curb lane right of way where they are permitted to be operating curb lane cafes. Notice of at least 10 business days** is imperative to ensure operators have a chance to revise staffing plans, avoid unnecessary costs, and safely remove their platforms, fencing and other cafe equipment to avoid damages by City or its contractors.

- **The City will need to work to ensure enough grants are available to help operators cover these costs in 2023** as it is quite late to be announcing such expensive changes. **If grants cannot be provided to operators, we ask that a phased-in approach be allowed to enable operators to plan for these additional expenses beyond this year (2024 and beyond)**, which we have heard can run to \$15,000-20,000 for ownership for the average operator, with rental options being much more affordable. Providing notice well ahead of the new year so that operators can fully save up and plan for such platforms in 2024 and beyond would be the preferred approach, **and/or ensuring an emphasis on affordable options such as rentals to ensure grants remain accessible this year to the most operators.**
- **Once again, can the City provide some flexibility on the proposed platforms as there will likely be a lack of suppliers** at this time to provide and build out this type of specialized equipment, and the timeline following any approval from CafeTO (again based on past experience) may be too short in 2023 for all operators to coordinate such services. Whether or not this platform requirement is approved, **we request that communications and timelines be expedited to approve operators permit and grant applications and enable them to move forward with planning as early as possible in the calendar year.**

2) **BIA PILOT PROGRAM:** We are strongly in support of the proposed BIA Pilot Program to enable customization of the CafeTO program within BIAs. Without this ability to customize for adequate amounts of space for patios in the curb lane, the proposed default change to the amount of patio space for each operator would not allow for a profitable patio model. For example, in Riverside BIA along Queen Street East, the curb lane only allows for a very narrow patio model (about 1.5-2m width from the curb), so the proposed default of limiting the length of a patio to an operator's storefront is not feasible to operators.

**The Riverside BIA looks forward to participating in the pilot program and would request that it run beyond the two year proposed time frame, perhaps 3 years, to allow adequate time for research, study and reporting of results.**

3) **PERMIT AND SPACE FEES:** We understand the important of implementing permit fees; however, in combination with the costs for full platforms and fencing, we feel this will be a significant barrier to participation for the small business operators who need this program the most. Again if a phased in approach to either platforms or fees can be determined, it will help ensure this critical program remains accessible to small businesses.

Thank you for considering our concerns and suggestions. We are hopeful the CafeTO program can be continued in such a way in 2023 and beyond so as to still be accessible, feasible, and attractive to small businesses along Queen East, and throughout Toronto, as they continue to recover from pandemic economic impacts.

Sincerely,

*Dave Watson*  
Riverside BIA Board Member  
Co-owner of Eastbound Brewing Co

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