



To: Executive Committee, Toronto City Council

Re: Item - 2023.EX2.4, CaféTO 2023 and Beyond

From: Walk Toronto

Walk Toronto strongly supports the recommendation to require platforms level with the sidewalk for future CafeTO installations in curb lanes.

These platforms are necessary to make CafeTO installations fully accessible to people who use wheelchairs or who have other mobility challenges.

We understand that, in the emergency created by the pandemic, it made sense to use temporary measures in the form of ramps to provide some limited accessibility to CafeTO patios. However, these ramps were never sufficient to provide full accessibility. Because of the narrow width of curb lane patios, ramps often gave access to only one or two tables. In addition, it has been evident that less than half of establishments using CafeTO even bothered to install a ramp. Ramps are not a long-term solution for a permanent program.

It is natural that restaurant, café, and bar owners would be concerned about the up-front cost of these platforms. However, CafeTO has proved successful in significantly increasing the revenue of many restaurants during the warm months. Restaurants will be able to gauge whether the investment is worthwhile in relation to the additional revenue they can expect, just like any other capital investment restaurants make. It makes sense to push restaurants to make that investment this year, because half the cost will be covered through federal government grants.

Several restaurants in Toronto in fact already made this investment last year. The platforms proved very popular, improving the separation from street traffic for patrons. They thus created a better experience for all customers, not just those with accessibility needs. We believe, when restaurants make the calculation, that many will realize the platforms are a worthwhile long-term investment in their business. They are certainly a vital long-term investment in making Toronto a truly accessible city for all.

We urge Executive Committee and City Council to approve the measure to require platforms for CafeTO curb lane installations as part of making the program permanent.

*Walk Toronto is a grassroots, volunteer organization working to make Toronto a better city for walking.*

Thank you,

Dylan Reid

On behalf of Walk Toronto