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Dear members of Victoria City Council,

The owners and operators of both Saint Franks and Tora Tiki are pleased to provide a letter of support towards a motion proposed by both Councillor Loveday and Councillor Potts. The motion which was first put forward in 2019 is part of an initiative to support a healthy and vibrant downtown in direct relation to sexual health and violence prevention.

As you are aware we have seen a dramatic series of events unfold within the hospitality community, many survivors of sexual violence have come forward in the past few months to share their stories with the public. It has been a wake-up call for all of us in hospitality.

Clearly, we are talking about incredibly sensitive territory. Taking on sexual violence is not an easy task. It is something that exists in all workplaces, this isn't just an alcohol-infused issue. This is an every day, in all walks of life issue for women in general. Rape culture is real, victim-blaming is real, sexual harassment is real and sexual violence is real.

A group of us in hospitality has come together to formulate a plan in order to begin dealing with these issues within the workplace. We have been meeting weekly for the past month to develop strategies that will move us in the right direction. A large part of that plan is to develop an industry-led initiative that will support staff, guests, management and owners in education towards sexual health and violence prevention. Our aim is to develop a manual that would provide training and resources for all hospitality members. Many restaurants and bars are small business owned and do not have the financial resources to outsource HR consultation. When issues arise it is very hard for staff and management to navigate them, simply because they don't have access to support or educational tools. We would very much like to change that.

In order for us to make these kinds of changes, we need support from many different people and organizations. It is very important that we also have the support of local and provincial governments. Both Councillor Loveday and Councillor Potts have been invited into our space in order to help us see this initiative come to life. We support the direction of the motion passed in 2019 in regards to sexualized violence within Victoria nightlife.

We would like to work together as a community to help tackle these issues and strongly believe that this initiative needs to be lead by our industry. We would like to work alongside the proper organizations and affiliations to develop a workable plan that is easily accessible to anyone who is interested in taking part.

In order for a business to submit sexual harassment and sexual violence prevention plan alongside any type of license application, they first need the tools and resources to understand what that plan looks like. This is a step in the right direction to help with that kind of process. Proper guidelines need to be in place before we can ask business owners to submit something they may have never even considered in the past.

We would like to see the current motion put forward alongside thoughtful and meaningful conversation about what it actually means for the people who will be taking part. Our steering community for our project is working hard on this and we would like to work with the council on this important subject matter.

Thank you for considering all the humans involved...this is a massive undertaking and we must work together as a community to educate each other and begin to change the culture around sexual violence.

Warm Regards,

Robyn Stevenson

Owner/Operator

Saint Franks/ Tora Tiki