

Vancouver & District Labour Council



July 17, 2019

Mayor Kennedy Stewart and City Councillors
Via Email

Dear Mayor and Council:

We are writing to express our concern over an issue faced by women in the hospitality industry. Recently, many women in the industry have come forward with stories of persistent sexual harassment and sexual assault, often by guests, in highly sexualized and alcohol infused environments. We, therefore, support Councillors Boyle and Swanson's motion calling for city staff to investigate ways for the City of Vancouver to take a more proactive role on this issue.

For too long, this issue has been pervasive in the hospitality industry and now, due to the practices of a relative newcomer to the industry, Pacific Reach Properties, it appears to be growing worse.

Women working at the Pacific Reach owned Hotel Georgia – “an adult playground” – came forward with sexual assault and harassment complaints. Now more women from the Hotel Georgia have come forward. The same owner opened the Hotel Belmont with pornographic images objectifying women.

Other cities have taken steps to protect hospitality workers from sexual violence; the City of Victoria recently passed a bylaw requiring a sexual violence prevention plan from all new liquor license applicants; cities across the United States, including Seattle, have passed bylaws requiring panic buttons for hotel workers. We believe that our city can learn a lot from studying these examples.

We are also confident that Vancouver can develop new initiatives of our own to protect women by consulting with downtown hospitality owners and with advocacy groups for women workers in hotels and restaurants.

The City of Vancouver can and should play a leadership role in ensuring that employers prioritize the health and safety of their workers. As a City, we can ensure that all women, employees, and patrons of Vancouver's restaurants, bars, and hotels are safe and respected. We need to send a powerful message to hospitality owners, starting with Pacific Reach Properties, that this sort of behavior will not be tolerated. That is why we ask you, Mayor and Council, to vote in favor of the motion to end sexual harassment and violence in Vancouver's hospitality and service industries.

Sincerely,

Stephen von Sychowski
President,

cc: VDLC Executive Board

