**Call your councillor**

**Dear Supporter!

Support the Rights of Holistic Practitioners

We need your urgent assistance. City Council is voting next week (April 24th) to ban applications for for a new holistic practitioner licence from members associated with five professional holistic associations. It means a large number of non-English speakers may not able to obtain license and work in holistic centre.

This is of grave concern as it shuts out many people's ability to have decent work and dignified livelihood.

Here's what you can do:

1. Below is a sample email - please send it to your councilors.
2. As time is of the essence, please follow up with a phone call and ask them which way they will be voting.
3. If your organization is supporting. Please send your support letter to all councilors by email: clerk@toronto.ca
4. Finally, please get in touch with us and let us know what they said, so we can keep track of who is voting how.

The recommendation to stop future licences is coming on behalf of City by-law officers. This raises major concerns because:

1. Harassment, abuse, and misconduct by bylaw enforcement officers:

Based on research carried out with practitioners, more than 33% of the participants (21 out of 61) have experienced different kinds of abuse and violence from bylaw enforcement officers during an investigation. This includes: requiring the practitioners to remove their clothing, show their underwear, and be photographed; restricting practitioners from moving or using the washroom during the investigation; ordering practitioners to dance and sing to entertain the officers; and searching personal items without a warrant. Moreover, bylaw enforcement officers harass customers and infringe on their privacy, by entering the room while practitioners are providing services to clients or by ordering clients to leave the parlour, for example.

2. Excessive and disproportionate inspections and prosecutions:

The large number of charges issued by Municipal Licensing and Standards are a result of discriminatory, unnecessary, and excessive practices. Laying charges become the primary purpose of investigation.  Holistic centres are disproportionately and unfairly targeted and over inspected. The number of “visits” to holistic centre and holistic practitioners increased by 212% and 323% between 2013 to 2016, i.e.2585 times.

3. Using the guise of anti-trafficking as an excuse for excessive and abusive inspection and prosecution

Based on research of holistic centers and body-rub parlors from 2014 - 2016, there are no reports of any trafficking cases related to this industry. However, anti-trafficking investigations are often used as an excuse for excessive inspection, and the oppression and abuse of practitioners. For more information: [https://www.butterflysw.org/campaign](https://www.butterflysw.org/campaign%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Thank you for reading and your immediate attention.

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The sample email/phone script is below:

"Dear Councillor,

I am a resident of your ward. I am writing/calling you regarding an upcoming urgent motion before City Council this month.

The Licensing and Standards Committee is recommending that City Hall amend Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 545, Licensing so that no application for a new holistic practitioner licence be accepted from members associated with five professional holistic associations.

I am writing to you to urge you to vote against this recommendation. Here's why:

1. Chapter 545, Licensing, Body Rub Parlours and Holistic Centres is currently being reviewed. Research is meant to take place from May to August this year, and Consultation to take place in September and October. Stopping applications from professional holistic associations before the review is complete circumvents and undercuts the review itself. This motion to bar new licensing is an unreasonable and unnecessary action.

2. As consultations are not taking place until September, none of the Professional Holistic Associations have had a chance to meaningfully and publicly participate in the review. To bar future licensing at this juncture puts individual and small businesses' livelihood to jeopardy without due process.

3. There are many concerns that professional holistic associations have raised about by-law officers, upon whose recommendation this motion is appearing before City Council. In fact, Tracey Cook, executive director of Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS), told CityNews last week that the City has launched an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment by by-law officers against workers in holistic centers.

Thank you for your support.  Can you please let me know which way you will be voting?

Your name

Your address**