

Restaurant Realities: Raising Our Voice in Alberta

WHEN FOODSERVICE THRIVES, SO DO OUR COMMUNITIES

A thriving foodservice sector is critical to the wellbeing of communities across Alberta, contributing jobs, investment, innovation, tourism and spaces for people to come together. Unfortunately, many of Alberta's restaurants are struggling to survive due to a number of recent legislative and regulatory changes that have dramatically increased the cost of doing business in the province. Working together with Restaurants Canada, Alberta's next government has an opportunity to improve conditions for foodservice businesses so that they can continue contributing to healthy, vibrant communities.

KEY ISSUE

Carbon Tax and Waste Reduction Regulations: With consumers growing increasingly concerned over the environmental impacts of their dining habits, restaurateurs are likewise becoming more focused on the sustainability of their business operations. According to the results of a recent Restaurants Canada survey, the majority of Canada's foodservice operators recognize that environmental sustainability is important to their success. But with the average profit margin for a restaurant in Alberta being only about 5 per cent, the financial impact that environmental policies have on the foodservice sector needs to be mitigated wherever possible. Small business operators face particularly tough choices when their operating costs rise suddenly, and the difficult decisions that they must make as a result can have market-wide consequences for workers and consumers.

Many foodservice businesses have large spaces to heat and rely on equipment that runs on natural gas to cook and safely preserve food. A large portion, if not the majority of a restaurant's energy use goes directly into the food preparation process. Restaurateurs can do very little to reduce energy use that is used to prepare, cook and preserve food to ensure food safety. Penalties placed on high-emitting manufacturers, food producers and suppliers also trickle down to foodservice operators, who depend on a multitude of products to run their businesses. Restaurateurs are also increasingly facing provincial regulations and municipal bylaws intended to reduce plastic packaging and other single-use items. Meanwhile, consumer demand is continuing to grow for delivery and take-out meals, which require containers and other single-use products to ensure food quality and safety, as well as accessibility.

Restaurants Canada recommends:

- ***Giving carbon tax rebates to small businesses with commercial kitchens whose primary business purpose is foodservice.***
- ***Providing enough time for restaurateurs to transition to reasonably priced alternatives before introducing waste reduction regulations or bylaws targeting plastic packaging or other single-use items.***
- ***Executing comprehensive, publicly funded consumer education campaigns before implementing any waste reduction regulations or bylaws.***

ALBERTA'S FOODSERVICE SECTOR AT A GLANCE

- Our industry includes 11,260 small businesses and generates \$11 billion in annual sales.
- For every dollar spent in a restaurant, \$1.85 is spent in the rest of Alberta's economy.
- With roughly 150,000 foodservice workers, our sector is the third largest employer in the province.



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