

## Liquor Control & Licensing Branch Consultation

### Refilling growlers at liquor stores - invitation for comments

The Liquor Control and Licensing Branch is inviting comments from breweries, beer and wine industry associations, liquor retail associations, and related stakeholders in relation to Recommendation 68 of the Liquor Policy Review.

#### **Background:**

In 2013, Parliamentary Secretary, John Yap, was appointed to review liquor policies in British Columbia. Mr. Yap made 73 recommendations for change to B.C. liquor policies, all approved in principle by the B.C. Government. Included is:

**Recommendation 68. Allow private and public retail liquor stores to sell growlers (refillable bottles) and operate refilling stations.**

The recommendation is made in the context of reducing red-tape and increasing flexibility with licensees.

A growler is a refillable bottle of defined size, usually a 64-ounce (1.9L), filled directly from a tap. Permitted under B.C. liquor policy since about 14 years ago, customers may bring their empty growlers to breweries or brewpubs to be filled with beer at prices generally lower than if customers purchased the same quantity in cans or 12-ounce bottles. Recently, B.C. has also added ciders into the allowable list of products filled in growlers.

In Ontario and Saskatchewan, like B.C., only breweries and brewpubs may refill growlers with beer. In Ontario breweries and brewpubs cannot refill growlers with competitor's labels, whereas in Saskatchewan breweries and brewpubs may refill bottles with competitor's labels.

In Manitoba a pilot project is scheduled for fall 2014 in which growlers can be filled at government liquor stores.

In Alberta, as of 2013, in addition to being filled at manufacturer's sites under previously existing policy, growlers may now also be refilled at liquor stores with either beer or wine. In 2013, Oregon allowed wineries and licensed establishments to fill wine and cider growlers up to two gallons, including 32-ounce "growlettes" and standard 25-ounce wine bottles. Beer growlers have been allowed under previously existing policy. Refilling wine is generally permitted in Europe.

Recommendation 68 proposes to expand the B.C. market by which growlers may be re-filled at public and private liquor stores. It is open for discussion as to whether this expansion will include wine, ciders, and/or coolers.

This proposal may involve changes to the Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) practices surrounding the transportation and delivery of kegs to liquor stores for the purpose of filling growlers. The LDB currently facilitates delivery of kegs only to food or liquor primary establishments. The packaged mark-up rates will apply to growler fills.

Amendments to the *Liquor Control and Licensing Regulations* will also be required to redefine packaged liquor. Presently, the packaging of liquor is defined in the Regulations as enclosing liquor in containers that are intended to be distributed to consumers. As it is currently written, this definition applies only to those with manufacturer licences, and so the definition needs to be amended to apply to other licensees.

## Questionnaire

Government is inviting your responses to the following questions:

- Generally, what are your concerns, if any, with government allowing private and public retail stores to sell growlers and operate refilling stations?
- How will sales of growlers from private and public retail stores affect your business?
- Does the size/volume of the growler bottle need to be restricted?
- Do you have concerns about the labelling of growlers, particularly whether a brewery, manufacturer, or liquor store can refill a growler with a competitor's label?
- Should wine and ciders and coolers be included in growler sales? What special considerations and concerns involve wine, cider, or cooler growlers?

Please provide responses by September 12, 2014 by email to [Hugh.Trenchard@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Hugh.Trenchard@gov.bc.ca). Ph: 250-952-5794.

Thank you for your time and consideration.