
FACTSHEET

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Ministry of Justice

B.C. Liquor Policy Review: Health and public safety

The B.C. Liquor Policy Review made 73 recommendations to modernize B.C.'s liquor industry with an emphasis on health and public safety. Once implemented, the following recommendations will increase public education, require training of everyone selling and serving alcohol, more closely link the price of liquor to alcohol content and provide for stricter enforcement of existing legislation and regulations. They are as follows:

Serving it Right program:

- Expand and enhance the provincial government's responsible beverage service program, Serving it Right (SIR).
- Require licensees, managers, and sales and serving staff in restaurants, wine stores, rural agency stores and BC Liquor Stores to be certified.
- Introduce a recertification program for all SIR holders.
- Develop a SIR program for people who receive a Special Occasion Licence or serve at these events to help ensure they understand their responsibilities around responsible handling of liquor.
- Update SIR content to include information about Canada's low-risk drinking guidelines, the social and health costs of alcohol and why alcohol is regulated.

Pricing:

- Permit licensees to offer time-limited drink specials (e.g., happy hours), provided the price is not below a prescribed minimum consistent with those supported by health advocates.
- The Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) will review its minimum pricing policy as it applies to all categories of liquor so that minimum prices are set at an appropriate level.
- The LDB will tie minimum prices to the amount of alcohol (e.g., a beer with seven per cent alcohol would have a higher minimum price than a beer with five per cent alcohol).

Public education:

- Expand public education about health and safety risks related to alcohol use, with particular emphasis on the harmful effects of binge drinking by youth and post-secondary students.
- Identify all of government's alcohol-related education initiatives to ensure they are focused and are as effective as possible.

- Make information about Canada’s Low Risk Drinking Guidelines available to consumers in licensed establishments.
- Collaborate between government, public health officials and industry to develop effective and meaningful social responsibility educational campaigns for display in licensed establishments, liquor stores and advertising and public service campaigns.
- Work with other provinces and territories to encourage the federal government to put warning labels on liquor products.

Enforcement and compliance:

- Encourage police to use the enforcement tools of ticketing and fines more frequently for those people under 19 years of age who are caught possessing liquor, using false identification or being in restricted premises selling liquor. Liquor retailers and the public should also be made more aware of the severity of these penalties.
- Review the enforcement penalties of the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch (LCLB) and other jurisdictions to ensure that B.C.’s penalty levels are appropriate.
- Consider how different types of penalties (e.g., a suspension versus a monetary penalty) may impact a licensee and staff due to the varying size and focus of licensed establishments.
- Explore the implementation of “last drink” programs across B.C. on a more concerted basis via discussions between the LCLB and policing agencies. If an impaired person’s last drink was in a licensed establishment, the LCLB can investigate and possibly levy penalties for over-serving clients.
- Authorize the LCLB to regulate the home delivery of alcohol and to consider that home delivery service providers require SIR certification.
- Develop a new and separate decision-making body outside the licensing branch for applicants and licensees seeking a review of LCLB decisions. The Ministry of Justice should review current processes and determine how best to provide independent decision-making for those seeking appeal.

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