

May 15, 2013

**MORE CHOICE FOR CONSUMERS, LESS RED TAPE FOR BUSINESSES ON TAP
AS PROVINCE MOVES TO MODERNIZE LIQUOR LAWS**

- - -

**Complete Overhaul of Rules will Achieve Administrative Savings for Taxpayers,
Renew Commitment to Public Safety, Social Responsibility, Community Input: Chomiak**

The province is taking a major step toward modernizing Manitoba's liquor laws by introducing legislation that would provide more choice for consumers and reduce red tape for businesses, while making historic investments in responsible gaming and consumption initiatives, Innovation, Energy and Mines Minister Dave Chomiak, minister responsible for gaming, announced today.

"Merging liquor and lotteries to save taxpayers money on administration also gives us the opportunity to modernize the rules to provide more choice for consumers and reduce red tape for the hospitality industry," said Chomiak. "By working with industry leaders, we have found common-sense ways to create exciting new entertainment opportunities for Manitobans, while maintaining a balance that ensures safety and social responsibility."

Guided by public consultations held last fall, the proposed changes would feature a complete update of the language of liquor laws that date back to the 1950s, the minister said, adding many of the existing laws would move into regulation to facilitate fine-tuning and ongoing reform in consultation with the hospitality industry.

Highlights would include:

- Streamlining of the number of liquor licenses to three (sales, manufacturing and service) from 12 and moving terms and conditions of licences into regulation.
- removing barriers licencing small live entertainment venues including the requirement that they have a capacity of 200 persons or larger;
- removing the outdated rule that prohibits a performance by a DJ from being considered live entertainment;
- allowing for liquor service in customer service environments such as hair salons and spas;
- providing more flexibility in the setting of liquor licence terms and conditions including the ability to establish a special category of liquor licence for distinct area such as the downtown Sports Hospitality Entertainment District;
- eliminating reporting requirements for restaurants on their sales of food compared to liquor;
- ensuring public notices for liquor applications would be more clear and visible, available online and in plain language;

- bringing liquor and gaming regulatory services under one roof, creating integrated licensing, inspection and compliance services;
 - for business, creating a single inspection process and single application to serve liquor and licence video lottery terminals; and
 - for families and community groups, creating a single online application for liquor and raffles when hosting Manitoba socials.

The minister noted the province will continue to work with the industry on the development of regulations that would expand on the new opportunities announced today.

“We applaud this major milestone of establishing an independent authority to regulate liquor and gaming in Manitoba,” said Scott Jocelyn, executive director of the Manitoba Food and Restaurant Association. “We are looking forward to assisting further in the modernization of our laws to help business and enhance consumer choice in a responsible way.”

“Manitoba hotels have been the cornerstones of the liquor and gaming components of the provincial hospitality industry from the very beginning of legislative regulation relating to the industry,” said Jim Baker, president and CEO, Manitoba Hotel Association. “We are supportive of this significant step to continue to modernize the laws and look forward to playing a significant role in the development of these reforms.”

“We applaud the province’s efforts to undertake a full review of the Liquor Control Act and commend the consultative process,” said Ross McGowan, president and CEO of CentreVenture Development Corporation. “This will provide a range of mechanisms that can be used to support our collective efforts in ensuring responsible operating practices of licensed establishments. It also provides new licensing opportunities that complement our vision for the emerging Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District and wider downtown revitalization efforts.”

The proposed new opportunities would be balanced with a renewed commitment to public safety, social responsibility and community input, said the minister, adding changes in this area would build on the province’s recent measures to strengthen anti-drinking and driving policies and tough requirements to prevent underage drinking/over-serving by:

- mandating in law that two per cent of net revenue of Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries is allocated to responsible gaming and consumption initiatives including dedicated funding to help Manitoba families coping with addictions;
- introducing swifter penalties for act violations involving underage drinking;
- introducing new measures to crackdown on premises that cause a repeat disturbance to communities (‘party houses’);

- strengthening tools to fight bootlegging including updating the offence of transporting liquor, providing for 'telewarrants' (obtaining warrants by telephone) and providing for seizure of liquor found in unlawful places;
- allowing for enforcement against products used in the manufacture of illegal alcoholic substances such as 'superjuice';
- ensuring risk-based inspections will use an education and collaborative approach while targeting repeat offenders;
- creating better and more opportunities for citizen and municipal input into the liquor licensing process including the recreation of a dispute resolution mechanism; and
- modernizing advertising standards, implementing nationally accepted standards and requiring social responsibility messaging.

The province will also build on reforms made through the 2011 Hospitality Strategy that introduced more than 40 measures such as establishing Liquor Mart Express Stores, multi-year licences and increased fines for service to minors, the minister said.

To provide for an orderly transition, those holding liquor licences would have up to two years to move into the new proposed license categories.