

Ontario Modernizes Liquor Laws

May 27, 2011

Ontario is modernizing its alcohol laws to better serve Ontarians. The changes eliminate unnecessary barriers for special events, festivals and licensed establishments, while maintaining the highest standards of social responsibility. This will provide Ontarians with a more enjoyable experience, and improve tourism and local economies.

The changes below come into effect on the following dates:

June 1, 2011:

- Holders of Special Occasion Permits (SOP) for special events such as weddings and charity fundraisers can serve alcohol for an extra hour until 2 a.m. They will also be able to start serving as early as 11 a.m. on Sunday.
- All-inclusive vacation packages, that include the price of alcohol, can now be sold in Ontario.
- Restaurant and bar servers can carry drinks on public sidewalks to licensed areas such as patios.
- Street festivals can allow people to leave their bar or restaurant with a drink in hand, providing specified conditions are met to ensure public safety.
- Festivals and events can define an area larger than beer tents where people can walk around freely with drinks. Local communities are free to customize the events to their needs.
- Boat tours can begin serving alcohol before the boat leaves the dock.
- Businesses, such as spas and art galleries, that are not mainly in the food and alcohol business will be able to apply for an SOP to serve alcohol during a special event.
- First Nations status card, Ministry of Transportation (MTO) photo cards and permanent resident cards can be used as proof of age.
- Venues with tiered seating such as stadiums and theatres can now apply for SOPs.
- The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) will now be allowed to impose risk-based conditions on event holders and levy fines for offences at these events.

August 2, 2011:

- Public events will be required to give more advance notice to municipalities and local officials such as police — up from 21 to 30 days for events under 5,000 people, and 60 days for events with 5,000 or more people.
- Businesses, such as galleries and spas, that are not mainly in the food and alcohol business will become eligible to apply for ongoing liquor sales licences, as opposed to an SOP for a one-time event, and the restrictions on the use of tiered seating in licensed establishments will be eliminated.

July 1, 2012:

- The categories for SOPs will be streamlined. Private events and industry promotional events categories will replace the current reception, trade show, consumer show and market-research event categories.
- Permits will be able to be issued for multiple day events, and the carryover of liquor will be allowed between occurrences.
- Applications for SOPs can now be made at any Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) store. Applicants are no longer limited to the LCBO location where the event will occur.

Nauman Khan, Minister's Office, 416-326-1785
Brendan Crawley, Communications Branch, 416-326-2210

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