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## ONTARIO TO DELIVER TRUE CHOICE, CONVENIENCE AND FAIRNESS FOR BEER AND WINE CONSUMERS

Province to Introduce Legislation to End Decades-old Near-Monopoly on Beer Sales

Vic Fedeli, Minister of Finance, announced the Government of Ontario is putting people first and moving forward to fulfill its commitment to increase choice, convenience and fairness for alcohol consumers.

The government plans to introduce legislation that would, if passed and proclaimed, terminate the previous government's unfair agreement with the Beer Store, allowing Ontario's government to expand alcohol sales to corner, big-box, and more grocery stores while protecting taxpayers.

"The unfair agreement with the Beer Store puts the interests of three large global brewers ahead of Ontario consumers, taxpayers and small businesses," said Fedeli. "It's a bad deal for people in Ontario who want more choice and convenience, and it's deeply unfair to businesses who want to compete in this sector."

Today, the government released a report delivered by Ken Hughes, Ontario's Special Advisor for the Beverage Alcohol Review. It details the inconvenience and unfairness of the current system for everyday Ontario consumers, and identified the agreement with the Beer Store and its private owners as the primary obstacle to



achieving a more fair and convenient alcohol retail system in Ontario.

"Many of the current challenges with alcohol retail in Ontario stem from the 2015 Master Framework Agreement signed by the previous government, the Beer Store and the three large global brewers who own it," said Ken Hughes, Special Advisor for the Beverage Alcohol Review. "Because of it, many small businesses are shut out of alcohol retail, and the economic benefits that could come from an expanded market."

Ontario's Government for the People looks forward to continuing discussions with the Beer Store with the goal of reaching a mutually agreeable amendment that will improve choice and convenience.

"It's my hope the multinational brewers who own the Beer Store will put the interest of their customers and Ontarians first and join us as we build a modern, equitable system that

opens up more places to buy beer while we create a model that also allows small businesses to grow and create jobs," concluded Fedeli.

### QUICK FACTS

The Beer Store is owned and controlled primarily by three large multinational corporations – Molson owns 51 per cent, Labatt owns 45 per cent and Sleeman owns 4 per cent.

Craft beer sales account for less than 2 per cent of sales at the Beer Store, but they make up over 10 per cent of sales at the LCBO and over 15 per cent at grocery stores.

The Master Framework Agreement gives the Beer Store the exclusive right to sell 12 and 24 packs in most of their local markets, forcing consumers to buy from the Beer Store if they want to purchase in bulk.

Ontario has fewer stores that can sell alcohol than any other province when compared against population size. There are over 8,000 retail stores in Quebec selling alcohol, but fewer than 3,000 in Ontario.

A recent report by the Retail Council of Canada suggested that simply by increasing the number of alcohol retailers to the national average, Ontario would see 9,100 jobs created. It also stated that before taxes are considered, the prices of popular 24 packs of beer in Ontario are still 8.3 per cent higher than in Quebec.

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