



B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union
A component of NUPGE (CLC)

October 27, 2015

SENT VIA EMAIL

Honourable Christy Clark
PO Box 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Clark

Re: Wine Sales in Grocery Stores

I am writing to share my concerns about the BC government's recent decision to allow wine on grocery shelves, and to request a six-month moratorium on the expansion of grocery store wine sales.

The BCGEU's membership includes approximately 3,800 employees of the Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB), who work in BC Liquor Stores across the province, as well as in the LDB's wholesale customer centres, distribution centres and head office. The BCGEU also represents workers who administer liquor licenses, conduct inspections, and develop liquor policy in the Ministry of Justice's Liquor Control and Licensing Branch (LCLB).

Our members who work in this area take social responsibility very seriously – they understand the importance of keeping alcohol out of the hands of minors, as the age at which a person begins to consume alcohol is known to affect their risk for a wide range of health and social problems. LCLB reports show that BC Liquor Store employees are consistently the best at refusing to sell alcohol to minors.

I am concerned that grocery store sales of BC wine, cider and saké will make alcohol more available to minors for many reasons, including the following:

- Grocery store employees who sell alcohol do not have the same level of social responsibility training as BC Liquor Store employees. Alcohol sales will be only a small part of the job for grocery store employees which means that they will not be as experienced with the rules around ID, nor at identifying false ID. As a result, it may be easier for minors to purchase alcohol at grocery stores than at BC Liquor stores;

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- It will be easier for youth to shoplift alcohol from grocery stores than from BC Liquor stores; BC Liquor stores are small, with attention paid to ensuring staff have good sightlines to all areas of the store, while grocery stores are larger with tall shelving that blocks sightlines.

I am also concerned that grocery store sales of alcohol will not always be limited to BC wine, cider and saké as the "BC only" model may violate our international trade obligations. A successful international trade challenge, by a group such as California's Wine Institute, would result in grocery stores being able to sell a much wider variety of products, quite possibly leading to the sale of a full range of alcohol products on grocery store shelves. This would be a problem not only because it could make alcohol more available to minors, but also because it would result in a significant increase in the number of liquor retail locations in BC.

This increase would be particularly negative because the "one kilometre" rule does not apply to grocery store wine sales, meaning that a grocery store can sell BC wine even if there is a BC Liquor Store or private liquor store right next door to it. After a successful international trade challenge, this would mean that a community could have competing liquor retail locations side-by-side. Such an increase in number and density of liquor retail locations could cause unforeseen health and public safety consequences for our communities.

It is for these reasons that I am requesting a six-month moratorium on the expansion of grocery store sales of BC wine. I would ask that the government use the moratorium period to consider if sales of BC wine in grocery stores are truly in the best interests of British Columbians.

If you require any additional information, or wish to discuss this further, I would be pleased to meet with you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Smith
President, BCGEU

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cope378

cc: Hon. Coralee Oakes, Minister Responsible for Liquor Distribution Branch
David Eby, opposition spokesperson for the Liquor Distribution Branch
Kimberlee MacGregor, BCGEU Vice-President