



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2015/05/21

REGULATIONS ON SALE OF BEER IN GROCERY STORES

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health consider strategies to advocate to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Ministry of Finance encouraging them to consider additional regulations on the sale of beer in grocery stores as outlined in Report No. 032-15 re Regulations on Sale of Beer in Grocery Stores.

Key Points

- The most recent expansion of beer sales in grocery stores has increased the availability of alcohol in our community.
- Research has shown that alcohol is directly linked with chronic disease, injuries and social problems.
- The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is encouraged to expand the social responsibility protections planned for the sale of beer in grocery stores.
- Healthy public policy is a necessity to reduce the burden of alcohol on our community, families and health care system.

Background

Recent government policy changes have expanded the retail and distribution of alcohol across Ontario. In the past few years, the Ontario government has initiated the sale of Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) wine in the Farmers' Market Pilot Program (2014), increased hours of sales (2011), removed barriers and restrictions for special events and festivals (2011), and demonstrated support for Craft Brewers and Ontario Vintners. This type of expansion has offered Ontarians more opportunities to purchase and use alcohol. There is strong evidence of negative health and social impacts increased alcohol availability has on our communities.

Supporting Regulations for Sale of Beer in Grocery Stores

On April 16, 2015 the Government of Ontario announced the sale of beer in 450 grocery stores around Ontario. As seen in the [Ministry ads](#), while purchasing eggs, fruit and bread, Ontarians can now purchase their beer. Research demonstrates that marketing to children (e.g., unhealthy food, tobacco and alcohol), results in children consuming more of that product and initiating use at an earlier age. This evidence raises concern about the normalization and increased access that beer in grocery stores will bring and thus warrants careful monitoring.

Since the decision to allow beer in 450 grocery stores is going forward, the Health Unit would like to encourage the government of Ontario to follow through with the social responsibility protections as outlined in the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care backgrounder released on April 16, 2015:

- Limit the number of locations authorized to sell beer,
- Clear restrictions on hours of sale,
- Limits on volumes sold at the new locations,
- Minimum and uniform pricing for beer,
- Designated sections in stores with access restricted outside of regulated hours of operation,
- Social responsibility training for all employees facilitating the purchase of beer,
- Appropriate check-out safeguards, and
- Restricted sales of beer to packs of six or less with no discounts or 'pack-up pricing' for multiple purchases.

In addition to the above noted regulations, MLHU agrees with other public health units and agencies in recommending that the following additional regulations be considered:

- Ensure all cashiers and staff who handle alcohol are over the age of 19 and complete the Smart Serve Training.
- Require the new locations to promote Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines at point-of-sale by making educational materials available and through staff training.
- Increase the number of alcohol inspectors to conduct regular compliance audits to ensure that licensed grocery stores selling beer do not operate outside of the terms of their license nor sell to underage or intoxicated individuals.
- Licence holders that fail their audit or commit a serious violation have their license permanently revoked.
- All licenced grocery stores be required to publicly report on their social responsibility programming annually (e.g., number of identified checked and number of individuals refused service due to intoxication).

Conclusion

Public health acknowledges that the consumption of alcohol has become ingrained in our culture. Our mandate is to educate both the public and policy makers that alcohol is not an ordinary commodity like other products. Thus, healthy public policy is necessary to reduce the health burden of alcohol on our communities, families and health care system.

The report was prepared by Ms. Mary Lou Albanese, Manager and Ms. Melissa Knowler, Pubic Health Nurse, Healthy Communities and Injury Prevention Team.



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This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards:
Prevention of Injury and Substance Misuse Standard Requirement #2.