

MEDIA RELEASE

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BC's pubs, bars, and restaurants gain access to wholesale liquor prices permanently

VANCOUVER – Today, British Columbia's Solicitor General Mike Farnworth announced one of the most significant liquor policy changes in a generation: BC's hospitality industry will now be able to access wholesale liquor prices permanently. This has been one of most urgent requests from thousands of small hospitality businesses struggling to recover from the devastating financial impacts of COVID-19.

"Minister Farnworth really came through for us today. This is exactly the kind of support and certainty our businesses need to recover, and to help keep our industry's 190,000 workers employed," said Jeff Guignard, Executive Director of BC's Alliance of Beverage Licensees (ABLE BC), the industry association that advocates on behalf of BC's private liquor industry.

Hospitality businesses had been granted temporary access to wholesale prices in June 2020, but the permission was set to expire March 31. Previously, BC's pubs, bars, restaurants paid an additional government-imposed markup on top of wholesale price, which became the same price you would see on BC Liquor Store shelves.

Accessing wholesale prices will reduce the cost of liquor purchases for pubs and restaurants by as much as 20 per cent, which could translate into about five per cent savings that goes directly to their bottom line.

"This will help thousands of neighbourhood pubs and restaurants walk back from the brink of bankruptcy and give them a legitimate chance at surviving the COVID-19 crisis," said Al McCreary, President of ABLE BC's Board of Directors. "With about 80 per cent of BC's pubs and restaurants slipping deeper into debt every month, this announcement could not have come at a better time."

"This is huge for our business," said Brendan Bonfield, Director of Operations at Darby's Hospitality Inc. "It will help us weather the pandemic financially and keep people employed, while also giving our customers better options that were unaffordable until now."

According to Guignard, "This is a perfect example of government and industry working together to support BC's small businesses. Making wholesale price permanent for hospitality licensees is a glimmer of stability at the exact moment we need it most."

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