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May 3, 2021

Dear Head of Council:

We are writing to you today to highlight some of the recent liquor licensing measures our government has taken to provide additional tools to municipalities to modernize the regulation of alcohol consumption.

As you know, our government has taken a series of actions to support Ontario's vibrant hospitality sector before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the more than 17,000 local restaurants and bars that are essential to life in our communities.

We will continue to work with Ontario businesses, workers and municipal partners to expand choice and convenience for consumers across the province.

Our government understands the important role that municipalities play in the effective administration of the liquor licensing framework, and we will work to continue this collaborative approach to support your community and the local businesses and workers that are essential to its economic growth and well-being.

On March 29, 2019, the *Liquor Licence Act* (LLA) was amended to authorize municipal governments to designate public areas within their jurisdiction, such as parks, for the public consumption of alcohol. Since that time, all municipalities in Ontario have had the flexibility to designate any area under their authority for the public consumption of alcohol, subject to any additional rules or conditions that the municipality considers appropriate (e.g. limitations on which day consumption could occur, times of day, etc.).

In addition to this important modernization of the province's regulatory framework for alcohol consumption, over the last 12 months our government has also delivered:

- Regulatory amendments that provide the Registrar of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) the authority to alter its policy regarding temporary extensions of licensed premises, facilitating the creation of new or extended outdoor licensed areas for licensed establishments, subject to municipal oversight;

- Making an order under the *Reopening Ontario Act, 2020* (O. Reg. 345/20) which created temporary exemptions to the *Planning Act* procedural requirements, allowing municipalities to quickly authorize by-laws to establish or expand bar and restaurant patios;
- Implemented regulatory changes to permit tour boats that were not permitted to operate, due to public health measures, to utilize their liquor sales licence while docked (which was previously prohibited under the regulations), and, with approval from the municipality, create an outdoor or patio area on the dock for the safe sale and service of alcohol;
- Provisions that permit liquor sales licensees to include alcohol as part of a takeout or delivery food order;
- Various changes to the liquor delivery service program to expand the types of delivery services permitted and provide flexibility and increased choice for consumers;
- Significant changes to the rules for liquor manufacturers, including the expansion of the farmers' market program to include the sale of 100% Ontario and non-VQA wine, spirits and most recently eligible beer; and
- New opportunities and flexibility for manufacturers in how they are permitted to retail their product at their manufacturing facility, and the offerings they are able to provide to tourists visiting those facilities.

While not all changes to liquor licensing include municipal involvement, the steps being taken to modernize the liquor regulatory framework are intended to support local businesses within your communities. Our government continues to recognize the significant contributions that municipalities make to the liquor regulatory framework, and we look forward to your ongoing participation and collaboration in this regard.

Should you have any questions regarding the information contained in this letter, please contact Joseph Hillier, Chief of Staff for the Attorney General, at joseph.hillier@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,



Doug Downey
Attorney General



Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

c: The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
Association of Municipalities of Ontario