

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION  
TO THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

*Actions that would assist Canadian brewers to meet their  
expansion, innovation and prosperity goals, thereby  
contributing to Canada's economic growth*

August 5, 2016

[finapbc-cpb@parl.gc.ca](mailto:finapbc-cpb@parl.gc.ca)



## Introduction

Beer Canada is the voice of the people who brew our nation's beer. Our members account for 90 percent of domestic production. While many companies and jobs have moved offshore, beer remains a local industry. Domestic brewers account for 85 percent of all the beer sold in the country. The sale of beer supports 163,000 jobs across Canada, according to a 2013 impact study by the Conference Board of Canada. And at the end of 2015, there were 644 licenced brewing facilities in communities across Canada, covering an estimated 225 federal riding districts.

We welcome the Finance Committee's invitation to participate in its 2017 pre-budget consultation. There are many federal rules, regulations, policies and taxes that come into play with respect to beer. In this submission, we narrow our focus on two actions that would assist Canadian brewers in meeting their expansion and innovation goals, and thereby contributing to Canada's economic growth and prosperity.

We request that the Finance Committee recommend the federal government reduce the tiered federal excise duty on beer by 13.5 percent. Excise duty is a tax on production, and the federal rate in Canada is double the US federal rate. Lowering the excise duty will spur investment, expansion and growth. Proof of this is in the growth of the number of brewing facilities, and the 3,000 jobs created, since the progressive excise schedule was implemented in 2006.

We also request that the Committee recommend the federal government modernize and amend the Beer Standard on a priority basis. The Standard, which resides under the Food and Drug Regulations, is out of step with the competitive landscape within the beer category. It is also out of step with changes the federal government has made to the way it authorises the use of food additives. A commitment was made in the 2014 budget to modernize the Beer Standard and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency completed its pre-consultation process in 2015. Momentum needs to be maintained to keep pace with the competitive landscape brewers face today.

Brewers directly employ 12,000 Canadians and pay \$1 billion in salaries and wages. Beer is made with malt barley, a grain that Canada is exceptionally good at growing. Beer is naturally low in sugar and low in alcohol. A growing beer category benefits Canada. We ask that the Committee advance our request for these two actions to be taken. They will lead to expansion, innovation and economic growth.

## **Reduce Excise Duty on Beer by 13.5 Percent**

We request that the Finance Committee recommend that the federal government reduce the tiered federal excise duty on beer by 13.5 percent. Excise duty on beer is a tax on production, and the federal rate in Canada is double the US federal rate. Lowering the excise duty on beer will spur investment, expansion and growth. As an example, the introduction of the tiered excise schedule for beer in 2006 has led to a 200 percent growth in the number of brewing facilities and the creation of 3,000 jobs.

Why 13.5 percent?

In 1991, excise rates across all beverage alcohol categories were increased to keep the federal government whole when it replaced the manufacturing sales tax with the goods and services tax. The model the government used to adjust excise rates resulted in a larger rate increase for beer relative to wine coolers, spirit coolers and ciders. In 2006, the federal government introduced a progressive excise schedule on beer and an exemption on wine (including wine coolers and ciders) made with 100 percent Canadian agricultural product. Today, coolers and ciders pay an excise duty of €29.5 / litre, and no excise when made with 100 percent Canadian agricultural product. Yet they compete in the low alcohol single serve space against brewers that pay €31.2 per litre. The 13.5 percent reduction would restore the differential that existed between beer and coolers prior to the change in 1991.

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It will be argued by some that the excise duty rate on beer has not changed in a decade; that the real rate has fallen and there is no need to reduce it. Our counter is that excise remains a tax on production, it is money taken from a brewer that would otherwise put it toward new tanks, a new fleet vehicle, more sales people, or a new product launch.

A brewing industry that is growing is good for Canada. According a Conference Board of Canada 2013 study, one dollar of beer sold in Canada generates \$1.12 in Gross Domestic Product, not including the taxes and fees generated by the sale of beer. This positive impact stems from the fact that brewing is a local industry, with 85 percent of beer sold in Canada, brewed in Canada.

## **Amend the Beer Standard**

Brewing represents 10 percent of the GDP generated by Canada's domestic food and beverage manufacturing sector, and 73 percent of the GDP generated by the domestic beverage alcohol industry. The Beer Standard under the federal Food and Drug Regulations is foundational for brewers. We are advocating for it to be amended, and have proposed a modern Standard that would assist brewers with keeping pace with the competitive landscape they face today. In 1990 there were less than 500 brands of beer sold in Canada. There are now more than 4000. The pace of change is not slowing.

As the compositional standard of identity for beer, the Beer Standard informs the brewing community which ingredients are required, and which are permitted, for use in a product labelled as a beer. It has not been meaningfully updated for decades. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food recommended that it be modernized in a 2013 report. The federal government committed to modernizing the Beer Standard in Budget 2014. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency completed pre-consultations in the fall of 2014, hearing from 180 stakeholders on our proposed modern Beer Standard. It remains a priority for Canada's brewing community to see the regulations amended.

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We have proposed a modern Standard that offers the following benefits to the brewing community:

- Brings together past guidance and interpretation in one place, making regulatory compliance simpler for brewers and more consistently applied by regulators;
- Uses beer's naturally low sugar content to set an objective criteria for defining a beer, simplifying the label approval process at the brewer and the regulator level;
- Foster innovation and strengthen a brewers' opportunity to compete by clearly incorporating spice, fruit, and juice and flavour preparations as permitted ingredients in beer.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is pursuing a food labelling modernization initiative. This is a very significant, complex, once in a generation initiative, that will involve hundreds of groups within the food and beverage sector. It will take many years to complete. Brewers are ready to modernize their Beer Standard now. The competitive landscape will not slow or pause for brewers. We urge the federal government to amend the Beer Standard so Canadian brewers can innovate, compete and thrive.

## Conclusion

In this submission, we narrow our focus to two actions that the federal government can take to assist Canadian brewers in meeting their expansion and innovation goals, and thereby increase their contribution to Canada’s economic growth and prosperity. These two actions are:

- Reduce the excise duty on beer by 13.5 percent; and
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Beer’s substantial economic impact stems from the fact that brewing remains a local industry. Unlike many other industries that have moved jobs offshore, domestic brewers produce 85 percent of the beer sold in the country. Reducing the excise duty on beer would spur investment, create jobs and correct a tax bias enjoyed by coolers and ciders. The brewing community has collaborated and come together to develop a new modern Beer Standard, one that will facilitate innovation and enhance the competitiveness of Canadian brewers. The federal government needs to complete the Beer Standard amendment process it has started on a priority basis.

We would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee to further elaborate on these two actions the federal government can take to assist Canadian brewers continue to expand their operations, innovate and thereby grow the Canadian economy.

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Alley Kat Brewing Company	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	Prince Edward Island Brewing Co.
Bierbrier Brewing Inc.	Labatt Breweries of Canada	Pump House Brewery
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Why 13.5 percent?

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## **Amend the Beer Standard**

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