



For Immediate Release

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Saskatchewan's Public Liquor System Superior to Alberta and BC private retailers in price, revenue and mitigating social harm: Report

Regina —Saskatchewan's public liquor system is superior to both Alberta and British Columbia's private liquor delivery system in terms of price, revenue generation and the mitigation of social harm. That is the conclusion of a new collaborative report by the Saskatchewan office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Parkland Institute.

Impaired Judgement: The Economic and Social Consequences of Liquor Privatization in Western Canada authored by public finance economist Greg Flanagan and Parkland Public Policy Research Manager David Campanella is a comparative study of liquor systems in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The authors conclude that the full privatization of liquor stores in Alberta and the partial privatization in British Columbia have resulted in higher prices, lower revenues for government and increased social harms in comparison to Saskatchewan's public system.

Some of the highlights of the report include:

- In a price comparison of beer, wine and spirits in the three provinces, BC's private stores had the highest price on 11 of 13 products surveyed, while Alberta's private stores were the second costliest. Saskatchewan and British Columbia's public stores had the lowest prices among the 13 products surveyed.
- Since privatization, Alberta has forgone nearly \$1.5 billion in tax revenue. In contrast Saskatchewan's per capita liquor revenue has increased over the same time period.
- Public stores consistently demonstrate higher compliance rates than private stores in regards to sales to minors or intoxicated patrons. In BC, public stores had an average compliance rate of 70% compared to only 35% for private stores.
- After the 1993 liquor privatization in Alberta, Edmonton police reported double the amount of offences for minors in possession of alcohol.
- A public monopoly allows communities to control the density of liquor stores in their neighbourhoods. In contrast, liquor store density in BC after partial privatization increased 56.83%, while density in Alberta increased 72.18% post-privatization. In contrast, Saskatchewan's liquor store density has actually decreased 11.10% in the past decade.
- A public monopoly also allows for the greater regulation of low-price, high alcohol-content products marketed to youth.
- A 2011 study by the Centre for Addictions Research for British Columbia, University of Victoria, found that each additional private liquor store per 1,000 residents 15 years and older increased local alcohol mortality by 27.5 per cent in B.C. between 2003 and 2008.

According to the authors, the evidence from privatization in Alberta and British Columbia has meant higher prices, a massive expansion of liquor outlets, greater inclination to sell to minors and reduced government revenue. In light of Premier Brad Wall's comments on moving Saskatchewan to a hybrid private/public model along the lines of British Columbia, these social and economic consequences of liquor privatization must be front and centre in any debate over the future of public liquor delivery in Saskatchewan.

To view the full report, visit here: www.parklandinstitute.ca

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