

June 13, 2015

**To: The Honourable Suzanne Anton, MLA, Justice Minister and Attorney General of British Columbia**

Dear Minister Anton:

We are writing you this letter as the Campaign for Real Ale Society of British Columbia (CAMRA BC) on behalf of the 1,600-plus paid members whom we represent, countless other craft beer consumers in BC, and all those who are upset at the most recent price increases to BC craft beers.

CAMRA BC is a consumer advocacy group, with branches in Victoria, Vancouver, South Fraser, Powell River, and South Okanagan. We are run by a volunteer executive elected annually by the membership and our mandate is to champion the cause of the craft beer consumers of BC. We are completely independent from the craft beer and hospitality industries and are funded primarily by the fees paid yearly by our members.

CAMRA BC was at the table during your government's "consultation phase" of the current BC liquor policy reforms and our representatives met face-to-face with your Parliamentary Secretary, John Yap. We came away from that meeting with great optimism that finally our concerns were being heard and taken seriously by the BC Liberal Party; but that optimism has since been dampened as the wants, needs, and concerns of BC's craft beer consumers have once again been ignored.

The recent surprise price hikes have added insult to injury to the craft beer consumers who seem to have been unfairly targeted. Despite many assurances by yourself that the craft beer consumers of BC would not be negatively impacted by the recent changes to the government alcohol pricing system, those same consumers find themselves paying up to 10% more for their favourite BC craft beers.

Initially, you were quoted as blaming the breweries for any price increases when the new wholesale pricing system came into effect, something most craft breweries denied being responsible. In fact, we have been told by many brewery representatives that they were forced to set their bottom-line, wholesale prices without knowing what the government mark-up was going to be set at. This put those breweries in the position of having no idea what the final price tag would be for their products on the shelves of liquor retail outlets. As a result, the prices of many products did increase slightly, but this was because the mark-up announcement was so late in coming.

The latest price hike comes as a complete surprise and targets consumers directly as the breweries are not receiving a penny more from the Liquor Distribution Branch despite price increases that measure at times close to 10%. This increase is a blatant grab of consumer dollars by your government.

Your government seems very proud of their "public consultation" that took place in 2013 and we

have often heard yourself, Parliamentary Secretary, John Yap, and Premier Clark speak about how you have “listened to British Columbians’ wants and needs” concerning changes to BC liquor policies.

We can guarantee you that not one BC craft beer consumer submitted a request for increases to BC craft beer, yet at our last count, over 87% of beers listed by the LDB have had increases since the new pricing system has taken effect. In fact, our numbers show that almost 200 listings have increased by more than 5%, 74 of those by more than 10%, most of those impacted by these hikes are craft beers.

There will come a point where prices will temper craft beer sales, which will impact the bottom line of craft breweries. Is it the intention of yourself and the BC Liberals to stifle one of BC’s most vibrant and fastest growing industries? Are you purposely trying to turn consumers away from our home-grown craft beers which could negatively impact jobs and the revenue brought in by our craft beer industry?

We implore you to reconsider these latest price increases and stop gouging the BC craft beer consumers who already pay some of the highest prices in North America for their favourite beers. No matter how many award-winning beers BC craft breweries produce, if there are no consumers buying these beers due to ridiculously high and prices, our craft beer community’s current growth and success will stall and potentially die.

Sincerely,

Ari Dressler  
President of the Campaign for Real Ale Society of BC

Paddy Treavor  
President of the Campaign for Real Ale Society of BC - Powell River Branch

Glen Stusek  
President of the Campaign for Real Ale Society of BC - Victoria Branch

Kim Lawton  
President of the Campaign for Real Ale Society of BC - South Okanagan Branch

David Perry  
President of the Campaign for Real Ale Society of BC - Vancouver Branch

Megan Harris  
President of the Campaign for Real Ale Society of BC - South Fraser Branch