

B.C. announces liquor law amendments

Special event rules easier for caterers; local liquor gets tax break

BY JEREMY SHEPHERD, NORTH SHORE NEWS FEBRUARY 20, 2013



Jason Stratton, owner of Bridge Brewing Company, a new North Vancouver brewery, says his company may benefit from liquor law amendments for special event licences.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Paul McGrath

UPCOMING changes to B.C. liquor laws could mean good things brewing for at least one North Vancouver beer maker.

The new laws make it easier for bars, breweries and caterers to apply for liquor licences for special events. Breweries will be able to offer mugs of beer in their own on-site lounge, as well as having partnerships with as many as three establishments that pour their brew. Distillers will receive a tax break if they use 100 per cent B.C. ingredients.

The changes are set to come into effect March 1. After opening its doors just off Dollarton Highway last summer, Bridge Brewing Company is planning to take advantage of the new laws, according to founder Jason Stratton.

"Out of our sampling or tasting room, previously we could only sell up to 375 millilitres of beer, which really is not even a pint or a full glass," Stratton says, discussing the company's signature pale ale. "With the new changes we're able to apply to be essentially a liquor primary - which means we can serve more than one glass of beer and can actually also serve wine or other liquors."

Becoming a liquor-primary establishment will require approval from the District of North Vancouver.

Located in an office/industrial park, Stratton said the new laws could allow Bridge Brewing to expand

beyond its 1,000 square feet of floor space. "Another thing that it potentially allows us to do is have a picnic area or an outdoor patio area," he said. "With these new licences we can actually be a destination for people to ride their bikes to in the summer and sit on our picnic area and have a beer out in the sun."

The company could also apply for permits to bring their seasonal brew to parties, corporate events or weddings, Stratton said.

While Bridge Brewing doesn't make hard alcohol, Stratton said the new laws may make distilleries a profitable business in the future.

"If you're making distilled alcohol, whiskey or vodka, and use all B.C. ingredients it's hugely favourable," he said. "I think there's going to be a rush into that market. The margins have been the issue (preventing) businesses from getting involved in distilling. Being tax free, that's the largest single cost of producing liquor, and having that not there is a huge advantage to the distilleries."

jshepherd@nsnews.com

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