

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Jones introduces the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act

Last week was the second annual Ontario Cider Week and as part of Cider Week, the Ontario Craft Cider Association came to Queen's Park to host their first ever Queen's Park reception.

It was June 2 when Farmhouse by Southern Cliff Brands was chosen as the First People's Choice and will now be promoted for a year in the restaurant at Queen's Park. That same day I also introduced my private member's bill, Bill 110 ? the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, which was co-sponsored by Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts.

Cider is a beverage made from apples or pears. The unique thing about Ontario craft cider is it uses 100 per cent Ontario grown apples or pears. In doing so, Ontario craft cideries are supporting Ontario apple and pear growers. In addition, it is one of the fastest growing categories of beverages at the LCBO. Recently, the sales of craft cider at the LCBO nearly doubled to \$4 million.

Ontario craft cider is an industry that is rapidly growing. For example, in 2008 there was only one craft cidery in our province. Now there are 22, including two cideries in Dufferin-Caledon: Spirit Tree Estate Cidery, which is on Boston Mills Road and where they have planted thousands of apple trees, which they use to make their unique cider and perry; and Southern Cliff Brands, which produces the Pommies and Farmhouse ciders.

Ontario craft cider is also very popular, not just locally, but also across the world. For example, at the 2015 Great Lakes International Cider and Perry Competition, 25 medals were awarded to Ontario ciders. We should be proud of this locally grown and produced product. But there is more to be done to continue growing this fledging industry. Even though sales for craft cider nearly doubled, the majority of cider sold in the LCBO is imported from outside of Canada. We can do more to support Ontario craft cider growers and producers, and they deserve the same support Ontario craft breweries currently receive from the government.

When the Ontario craft beer industry was in its infancy, they received support from the government by paying a lower tax rate, whereas Ontario craft cideries pay a 40 per cent mark-up on the price of their cider. That is why I brought forward my private member's bill, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, which will ensure that the tax or mark-up imposed on Ontario cider does not exceed the mark-up or tax imposed on beer in Ontario. This will help ensure Ontario cider producers receive the same incentives Ontario craft beer producers receive. I know that if we pass this bill, the number of cideries in our province will continue to grow, and the further development of this home-grown product will only increase.

If you are interested in learning more about Bill 110 ? the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, or have any questions, please visit www.sylviajonesmpp.ca

