

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act passes key vote

My private member's bill, Bill 110 ? the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, co-sponsored by MPP Arthur Potts, passed second reading in the Legislature Nov. 5 with unanimous support, bringing it one step closer to implementation.

Now that it has passed second reading, it has been referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills for further study and public comments.

Cider is one of the fastest growing categories of beverages at the LCBO. Just in the last year, the sale of craft cider at the LCBO nearly doubled to \$4 million. In a short time Ontario's craft cider industry has rapidly expanded. Since 2008 the number of cideries operating in Ontario has grown from just one in all of Ontario to 22, including Spirit Tree Estate Cidery and Southern Cliff Brands, makers of Pommies and Farmhouse Cider in Dufferin-Caledon. What truly makes Ontario craft cider unique is that it only uses Ontario apples and pears in their product. As a result, Ontario's craft cider industry is helping our local communities, especially our province's rural regions. I was pleased to have the Ontario Apple Growers endorse Bill 110, because they understand that Bill 110 will not only benefit Ontario craft cider producers, but Ontario apple and pear growers as well.

Even though Ontario's craft cider industry has expanded and sales have grown exponentially, they still face challenges that will hamper the growth of this fledgling industry. Even with the rise of sales for Ontario craft cider, the majority of cider sold at the LCBO is from outside of Canada. Another challenge Ontario craft cider producers face is the high mark-up they must pay to the LCBO. For example, Ontario craft cideries pay a 40 per cent mark-up on the price of their cider, whereas when Ontario's craft beer industry was in its infancy they received encouragement from the government by paying a lower tax rate.

We can do more to support Ontario's craft cider producers, and they deserve the same encouragement Ontario craft beer producers currently receive from the government. That is why I brought forward Bill 110 ? the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act, so Ontario's craft cider industry receives the same incentives that Ontario's craft beer industry has received over the years. Bill 110 will ensure the mark-up or tax imposed on Ontario cider does not exceed the mark-up or tax imposed on beer in Ontario. We should be proud of our Ontario grown and produced product, and I know that if we make these changes, the number of cideries in Ontario will continue to grow.

I would like to hear your thoughts on Bill 110 ? the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act and would appreciate your support.

If you are interested in reading the full debate or have any questions, please email me at sylvia.jonesla@pc.ola.org.

