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June 21, 2013

Jamie Baillie, Leader  
Progressive Conservative Party

Dear Mr. Baillie:

I am writing on behalf of the UNSM Board of Directors to express concern with your recent discussion paper: "Better consumer choice, more jobs: Modernizing Nova Scotia laws for retailing beer and wine". The UNSM is opposed to your party's proposal that would allow grocery stores and convenience stores to sell beer and wine.

For the past three years, the UNSM has been partnering with the Department of Health and Wellness and the District Health Authorities on a Municipal Alcohol Project aimed at assisting municipalities in reducing alcohol-related harms in their communities. The towns of Antigonish, Bridgewater, Wolfville, and Truro have produced reports documenting the serious impacts of alcohol use in their respective communities. These are available on the UNSM website at [unsm.ca](http://unsm.ca) should you wish to review them.

Alcohol is linked with more than 65 medical conditions and is a contributing factor in injuries, impairments and deaths caused by illness, impaired driving, homicides, suicides, falls, drowning, assaults, fires and other adverse events that threaten public safety and community well-being.

According to the National Alcohol Strategy Working Group (<http://www.ccsa.ca/2007%20CCSA%20Documents/ccsa-023876-2007.pdf>), alcohol resulted in the deaths of an estimated 4,258 Canadians in 2002 and cost society \$14.6 billion in lost productivity and health care and law enforcements costs.

From 1996 to 2009, overall per capita alcohol sales have risen by 13 per cent. This increase was greater in those provinces where the government-controlled systems have been eroded.

The discussion paper indicated that the PC Party would consult with various stakeholders including Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). This organization strongly supports the provincial liquor board model.

MADD's research indicates that privatized systems result in increased access to alcohol which in turn leads to increased alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems in society. In British Columbia, researchers found that areas with more private stores than government-run stores had significantly higher rates of alcohol-related deaths involving local residents. There was a 27.5% increase in alcohol-related deaths for every extra private liquor store per 1,000 British Columbians.

In addition to MADD, the World Health Organization, Canada's National Alcohol Strategy and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health have stated that government-controlled systems of liquor sales are the best option for controlling alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm in society.

Nova Scotia experiences significant burden related to alcohol.

- Our province averages 3100 alcohol-related hospital admissions each year (4200 days).
- Each year, 230 Nova Scotians lose their lives due to alcohol related causes. ([http://www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/publications/alcohol\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/publications/alcohol_strategy.pdf)).
- One in 5 Nova Scotians report binge drinking in Nova Scotia each month (Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/health80b-eng.htm>).
- Nova Scotian youth report the average age when starting to drink is 13.
- Halifax Regional Police report 600 arrests each year in Nova Scotia (based on Halifax Regional Police Crime Stats, 2012).

Nova Scotia's own alcohol strategy prepared in 2007 was released to prevent and reduce the burden of alcohol-related harm in Nova Scotia. A preliminary cost-benefit analysis presented by Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health in 2011 indicated that while there was significant provincial revenue (net income and provincial HST) from alcohol sales, the documented health, justice and other provincial costs associated with alcohol misuse is more than twice the provincial revenue .

The UNSM strongly supports the status quo of a government-controlled liquor board as a more effective means to control alcohol sales and consumption in our communities which leads to reduced alcohol-related harms.

Sincerely,



**Councillor Russell Walker**  
**UNSM President**

cc: UNSM Board of Directors  
Mayor Bill Mills, Town of Truro  
Mayor David Walker, Town of Bridgewater  
Councillor Bill Karsten, HRM  
Mayor Jeff Cantwell, Town of Wolfville  
Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Public Health Officer