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Delivering True Choice, Convenience and Fairness for Beer and Wine Consumers in Dufferin-Caledon

by SYLVIA JONES

Our government campaigned on a promise to put people first. This includes a focus on expanding choice and convenience for consumers in Ontario, while stimulating job growth. As part of this overarching goal, on May 27th, Minister of Finance Vic Fedeli announced plans to introduce the Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act that would, if passed, end an unfair agreement with the Beer Store. Our government understands that the people of DufferinCaledon and across Ontario deserve choice, convenience and fairness when purchasing alcohol. The previous government negotiated an agreement with the Beer Store that limited the sale of alcohol for consumers, and ultimately favoured the interests of three large global brewers ahead of taxpayers and small businesses. The decision that allowed 70% of the beer retail market to be controlled by global businesses has hurt local breweries and craft beer companies in DufferinCaledon. This near-monopoly has led to higher prices, fewer choices and inconvenience for consumers. Our government promised that Ontario would be open for business and open for jobs. That's why we are terminating the previous government's agreement with the Beer Store, which will allow local businesses to compete in the sector and expand alcohol sales to corner, big-box and more grocery stores. For the consumer in Dufferin-Caledon, this will mean more choice in alcohol consumption at locally owned and operated grocery and convenience stores. A recent report delivered by Ken Hughes, Ontario's Special Advisor for the Beverage Alcohol Review, details the inconvenience and unfairness caused by the current system in place. The primary obstacle to achieving fairness and convenience was the unfair deal with the Beer Store signed by the previous government. Hughes writes that as a result, the economic benefits that could come from an expanded market have been stifled. In fact, a recent report by the Retail Council of Canada estimated that increasing the number of alcohol retailers to match the national average could create up to 9,100 jobs. When comparing Ontario to other Canadian jurisdictions, Ontario has the lowest per capita number of stores able to sell alcohol. In Quebec, for example, there are 8,000 retail stores selling alcohol, while in Ontario fewer than 3,000 are able to do so. The Retail Council of Canada has also stated that the price of a 24 pack of beer in Ontario before tax is still 8.3 percent higher than in Quebec. Our government will continue putting people first to build a modern, equitable system that works for both consumers and small businesses. If you have any questions about the Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act, please call my office at 1-800-265-1603 or visit www.sylviajonesmpp.ca.