

Bill 8

The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act

April 2025



The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 130,000 unionized workers from every sector and every region of the province in the public and private sectors, as well as the building trades.

The MFL supports this bill as it will help to enhance community safety and protect Manitoba's balanced approach to liquor sales, something that working families want to see. Manitoba's local, publicly-owned liquor marts deliver high quality service to Manitobans and pour the profits that are made from it right back into our hospitals, schools, and other vital public services that we all count on.

The \$313 million in profits generated by Manitoba's public liquor system is money that is used to hire health care and education workers, and fund other public services we all count on.

Manitobans are very happy with our current public liquor system, and they love the high quality service and professionalism they get at Manitoba Liquor Marts. Customer service surveys consistently show more than 90% of Manitobans are very happy with the service they receive at Liquor Marts¹.

Manitoba's current model for liquor retail does a good job of balancing convenience with social responsibility. Liquor Marts operate in urban centres where they can be profitable, and private sellers exist in smaller regions where Liquor Marts are not profitable. It's a model that has existed for many years, and it's a model that works for Manitobans, because we all benefit from the public-owned profits.

Liquor Marts are nice places to shop, and the service and knowledge provided by the hardworking Manitobans there is second to none. Because it's a Crown Corporation, Manitobans own it, and it's accountable to us. And having well-trained staff helps to keep liquor out of the hands of minors. And because liquor marts are often bigger than a convenience store, they can ensure good selection for customers.

Unfortunately, the previous PC government tried to upend this balance by privatizing liquor sales and allowing for the sale of liquor at convenience stores like 7-11, a deeply irresponsible decision given the rampant crime plaguing our province that has caused several 7-11 locations to shut down across Winnipeg. Allowing for the sale of liquor at these locations would only serve to deepen these public safety problems.

Because of the advocacy of Liquor Mart workers and their union, the MGEU, Liquor Marts have been able to stem the rising tide of violence in liquor stores a few years ago by introducing controlled entries to their stores. These workplace safety measures have reduced thefts at Liquor Marts by an astonishing 97 per cent!²

¹ MGEU, KeepingLiquorPublic.ca campaign webpage.

² Ibid.

But no such controls exist at 7-11s and other convenience stores. Adding liquor to the mix would be a recipe for disaster, putting workers and the public at greater risk.

We are glad that the provincial government is taking steps to stop the granting of liquor licenses to places like 7-11. This is an important bill for public safety and an important bill to protect our tried-and-true liquor retail model, one that delivers high quality services and helps to fund the public services we all count on.

And while we're on the subject of our public liquor system, I want to take the time to thank the Government of Manitoba for banning scab labour in our province. Shamefully, scab labour was used by Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries during the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union liquor strike of 2023. I think we will all remember Heather Stefanson's famous, or perhaps infamous, video about how she 'drew the line' at fair pay for our province's liquor workers. The PC government was all too happy to force a strike at Manitoba Liquor Marts, thinking it would help them get re-elected.

Well, we all know how that went. I knocked on hundreds of doors during the provincial election campaign, and Manitobans were deeply unhappy with the Stefanson government's treatment of liquor workers, and of MPI workers too. So, I will close with some free advice for the PC members of this committee: think twice the next time your leader talks you into going after working people in this province.