



the **Publican** **25th Anniversary**

by Joyce Hayne

We are proud to announce that *The Publican* is celebrating its 25th Anniversary of keeping the BC liquor industry informed of important news and trends. There have been many changes in our industry over that period of time and what follows are some key issues that were reported in *The Publican* over the past 25 years.



1985-1989

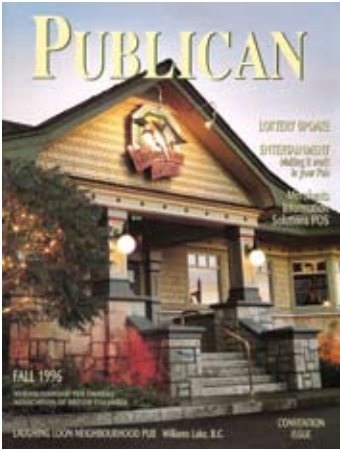
The Neighbourhood Pub Owners' Association (NPOA) as it was called in those days, hired Brenda Locke as its first Executive Director and got permanent office space with its own boardroom to host meetings. The voice of pubs suddenly got louder as the association lobbied government and hosted an annual event in Victoria to rub shoulders with government. Brenda's determination to raise the profile of the industry caught the attention of those in Victoria and helped bring about positive change in a volatile marketplace.

In 1986, the NPOA Convention went to Whistler and the association held its first trade show in the new Whistler Convention Centre. As luck would have it, a major snow storm came and no-one could come or go so the show was opened to the Whistler Resort Association and was ultimately very well attended.

About the same time, Cold Beer & Wine Stores started with a pilot project at the Silver Chalice Pub in Hope and as a result of that pilot project, pubs were given the exclusive opportunity to open these stores for two years before hotels got into the game. It was a foothold into the retail market that pubs enjoy to this day.

Expo 86 provided the impetus for the first Sunday openings for pubs, and customers took full advantage of the opportunity to watch afternoon sports at their favourite watering hole.

During 1989, the government was rocked with the Knight Street Pub Affair, a scandal that ultimately brought down the Premier for his involvement in approving a liquor license that circumvented the rules.



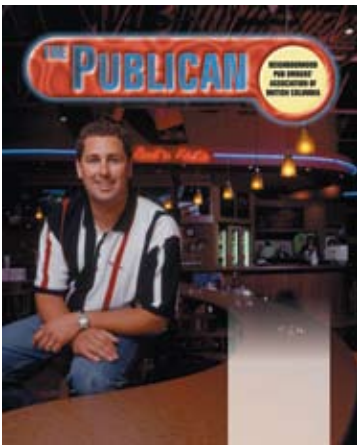
1990-1994

The early 1990s were a time of changing trends and consumer behaviour in the industry. To keep pace, the NPOA joined forces with the BC & Yukon Hotels' Association (BCYHA) and the BC Cabaret Association to hold one trade show for the hospitality industry that was considered a tremendous success.

During that time, microbreweries and import beers became popular and started offering consumers more choice in their beer, creating a dramatic change in how people conducted business.

In 1994, Brenda Locke, Roger Gibson, and Don Bellamy founded the Hospitality Industry Liquor Licensing Advisory Committee and got on board with other liquor license groups to develop the Serving It Right program. At the same time Hospitality Industry Education Advisory Committee developed a correspondence program for FOODSAFE. These changes brought about more consistent standards within the industry and helped to raise professionalism across the province.

In the meantime, U-Brews and U-Vins eroded the marketshare of beer, wine, cider, and cooler sales without any major regulations and licensing until 2000.

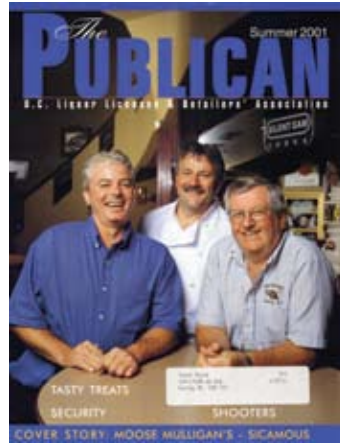


1995-1999

The latter half of the decade saw a deposit of \$30.00 introduced on kegs, so pub owners created stickers saying: "Deposit on this keg was paid for by X Pub." The stickers made a big mess clogging up drains at the breweries as the kegs were cleaned.

Proposed smoking bans in municipalities across BC kept publicans busy lobbying local and provincial governments to ensure smoking in pubs was permitted. A lot of research was conducted on clean air systems to demonstrate to government that installing these systems can improve air quality so it exceeds ASHRAE standards for clean indoor air.

The Hospitality Trade Exposition won Best Trade Show at the Canadian Event Industry Awards for having a cutting edge event.



2000-2004

NPOA was renamed in 2000 to the BC Liquor Licensee and Retailers Association (LLRA), firstly to address the changes that were underway in the Surich Report, and to welcome any liquor primary establishment to participate in the association.

Marianna Fiddler took over as

Executive Director in January 2001 when Brenda Locke moved onto a career in government. Another association name change occurred in 2004, when the association merged with liquor licensees from the BCYHA to form the Alliance of Beverage Licensees BC (ABLE) so the industry could go to government with one voice.

January 1st 2000 was the first day of the WCB's Smoking Ban, but by 2002 smoking rooms were allowed, only to be taken away in 2008 when it was decided that smoking was only permitted on patios.

Licensees with an off-sales endorsement were allowed to sell wine and advertise the availability of off-sales. Hotels and neighbour hood pub owners who held licenses for Cold Beer & Wines Stores could apply to the LCLB to enter into a third party lease or management contract.


August 2002 saw the LRS moratorium lifted and 523 applications were received for new LRS locations. Prior to the lifting of the LRS moratorium there were 291 independent stores, whereas now there are 679. At that time there were 223 government liquor stores, which are now down to 198. This ushered in a new era for liquor licensees in the province and marked a dramatic shift in liquor distribution.

The early part of the decade saw some very dramatic changes in the industry landscape. In December 2002, government removed the various license categories and placed liquor licenses into either Liquor Primary or Food Primary categories. Pubs' competitive advantage was eroded in December 2002 when restaurants were granted liquor-only lounge seating. Planet Hollywood also changed the entertainment in their restaurants by installing big screen TVs and acting like pubs in the way they sold their product and designed their establishments. Other restaurant chains then followed that lead. A new policy was also introduced so that patrons could bring home unfinished wine. At this time there was a new requirement for patrons looking under 25 years of age to produce two pieces of ID or licensees would be subject to enforcement action. In February 2007, ABLE successfully lobbied to have that rule removed.

Many changes were made to regulations surrounding LRS operations, and after a long lobby from LLRA, Cold Beer & Wine Stores were given the right to sell spirits in 2002 and to expand retail space. The politician in charge of the industry at the time, Minister Thorpe, also announced the privatization of the retailing, distribution, and warehousing divisions of the LDB, although later this plan was abandoned. In April 2003 the restriction that an LRS had to be less than 2,000 sq ft was lifted, and in November the Minister announced that LRS licenses received an additional 2% discount, bring it to 12%, and lottery sales were permitted in LRSs. The following May, the Minister announced a 0.5 km separation between LRS locations and an additional 4-year moratorium on any further LRS licenses. LRSs no longer needed to be attached to liquor primary locations and credit card use was reinstated for liquor purchases.

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2005-2010

Pubs around the province hosted fundraising events to raise over \$170,000 for Tsunami disaster relief in 2005.


LRSs received an additional 1% discount in April 2005 and in January 2007 the Minister announced an extra 3% discount, bringing the total discount to 16%.

2007 saw another change in the association's Executive Directors as Marianna was lured into pub ownership and bought into Rhinos Pub in Coquitlam. In June 2007, Kim Haakstad took over the helm of ABLE bringing with her a strong background in government relations. At the same time, LDB created a wholesale division spearheaded by Katherine Jowett and initiated an online ordering system.

During the May 2009 election campaign, the NDP ran on a platform of increasing the price liquor stores pay for their products. ABLE and its members branded this election platform commitment "The Six-Pack Attack". Through extensive media exposure, this campaign became one of the most high profile election issues, and proved the strength of ABLE's united voice.

A new revenue stream was introduced when LRSs that signed up with the Empty Container Program were paid a \$0.18 per dozen handling fee for all beer containers. This program was made possible through a partnership between BDL and Canada's National Brewers.

The definition of who needs to be licensed as door staff was worked on extensively before the program was finally introduced and required all door staff to be licensed by November 2009.

The past 25 years have seen many changes to the industry. New competitors, new opportunities, and new challenges were faced by the industry but regardless of these changes, the industry has flourished and prospered, promising a strong future for both LPs and LRSs. We will continue to keep you current on issues through *The Publican*. 

Many thanks to Brenda Locke and Marianna Fiddler for sharing their memories and experiences to make this article possible.

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