

Private Wine and Specialty Stores

Following the review of retail liquor service delivery options commissioned by the government in 2000, one of the initiatives announced as a result was the creation of a private component to the liquor retailing environment in Nova Scotia. Subsequently, government approved the establishment of four Private Wine and Specialty Stores (PWSS) in the province. Following a Call for Proposals, four such stores, all of them in the Halifax Regional Municipality, were approved for operation. The first of these stores opened early in 2003. They operate under a contract with the NSLC and are subject to the provisions of the Liquor Control Act. The operating model for the stores was initially based upon a similar program in the Province of Manitoba, although it has subsequently evolved over time in Nova Scotia. Its objectives were to improve service and selection for customers, and to offer an entrepreneurial opportunity for small business. Private stores source unique items from around the world and purchase them through the NSLC, which acts as the wholesaler. The stores are then free to set their own prices and market the products accordingly. Most items sold in the private stores are not available at NSLC stores.

In 2007, as the 5-year anniversary of the program approached, an economic impact study and analysis of the program was commissioned by the NSLC. The report, produced by Gardner Pinfold Consulting in conjunction with the NSLC and PWSS operators, and available online at the link below, concluded that while the program had satisfied its stated objective, there were a number of challenges associated with the operation of the program. Following consideration of the report's recommendations, government directed the NSLC to continue the program for a second 5-year period, and to work with the private operators to address the operating issues that were identified. As the end of the second 5 year period approached, another review will be carried out to assess the effectiveness of these changes. Until that time, the NSLC was directed not to expand the program further. The NSLC is therefore continuing to work with the private store operators to maintain a viable and cost-effective operating model. However, at this time, there is no mandate to expand the program, and as a result, applications for new stores are not being accepted.