



New NWT Liquor Regulations

What's Changing for Permit Holders

A plain-language guide to what the proposed Liquor Regulations would change

*All figures and dates below are **proposed** and may change. Section references are to the new Liquor Act (Bill 83, assented 2023) and the proposed Liquor Regulations (draft). Where this guide and the legislation differ, the legislation governs.*

Why we're sharing this

In short. The new Liquor Act has passed but is not yet in force. It takes effect when these regulations are finalized. This guide provides a high-level overview of the main proposed changes for permit holders, and it highlights the main changes for permit holders, so you can tell us what you think before the rules apply. Each change refers to the section behind it, so you can go directly to it in the regulations instead of working through every section.

Things that are staying the same are not repeated here, and step-by-step "how to" detail will follow later in handbooks and manuals.

How to comment. [Complete the survey today.](#) Responses will be accepted until October 16, 2026. All feedback will be reviewed and considered, though not every suggestion can be adopted.

What is staying the same

You still apply for a permit to serve liquor at a one-time event (a Special Occasion Permit) or to possess and use liquor for a defined purpose such as medicine or science (a Special Purpose Permit). A minor still cannot hold a permit. A permit still only authorizes liquor for the approved event or purpose, and a permit still expires on its stated date.

1. Who handles your permit

Now. The Liquor Licensing Board, or a person designated by the Minister, issues and can cancel permits.

Proposed. Permits sit within the new structure: the Registrar administers them, the Chief Inspector's inspectors handle compliance, and decisions can be appealed to the Liquor Appeals Board (Act, ss. 2, 89, 128–129).

What it means for you. Your point of contact changes. If you disagree with a permit decision, you can appeal it to the Liquor Appeals Board.



2. Three special-occasion permit classes become one

Now. There are three special-occasion permit classes: Class 1 (ordinary), Class 2 (resale, not for profit), and Class 3 (fundraising).

Proposed. These are replaced by a single Special Occasion Permit, with conditions set to fit the event (Regs, ss. 148-169).

What it means for you. You no longer choose among three permit classes. Instead, you'll apply for one occasion permit with conditions tailored to fit your event (including whether you may sell liquor or only serve it without charge, and the event's dates, hours and approved area).

Another important change is who can hold a permit. Until now, someone could hold a permit only to serve liquor without selling it (Class 1) or to sell it but not at a profit (Class 2); selling liquor to raise money (Class 3) was open only to non-profit organizations, and in no case could the event be run for profit. Going forward, any person 19 or older (including a business) may apply, and you may sell liquor and generate revenue from the event, including for profit (Regs, ss. 148, 153).

3. Managed Alcohol Programs under the Special Purpose Permit

Now. The Special Purpose Permit cover medicinal, scientific, or other regulated purposes.

Proposed. The Special Purpose Permit continues for health authorities, pharmacists, universities, and the Government of Canada, expressly allows for Managed Alcohol Programs (Regs, ss. 142-147).

What it means for you. If you run a health or harm-reduction service, there is now a defined permit basis for operating a Managed Alcohol Program.

4. SafeEvent certification

Now. There is no event-server training requirement to hold a permit event.

Proposed. A valid SafeEvent Certification is required in connection with a Special Occasion Permit (Regs, ss. 207-208). Anyone selling, serving, or providing liquor at your event must be certified, not just the permit holder. A SafeServe Certification also satisfies this requirement (Regs, s. 152(1)(c)).

What it means for you. Plan to obtain SafeEvent certification before your event and keep proof available.

5. Security planning

Proposed. A security plan may be required (Regs, ss. 149(3)).

What it means for you. Larger or higher-risk events need much earlier planning, and you should prepare a security plan where required. The security plan replaces the current requirement to list supervisors and have them sign the application. Instead, you'll describe how you plan to control access and safely manage the event. Rather than prescribing specific



security measures (for instance, the previous rule that an outdoor event be fully fenced), the proposed regulations focus on the outcome you must achieve while allowing flexibility in how you meet those requirements.

More detailed expectations will follow in policy and the handbooks to come.

6. Events that need no permit

Clarified. Not every gathering needs a permit, but a genuinely private event has to meet a specific criterion. To qualify, the event must be held in a private residence or a place not generally accessible to the public, must be invitation-only and not advertised or open to the public; free of any charge for the liquor or for admission; not tied to a raffle, ticket sale, or fundraiser; not used to promote a product or business; and held for a genuine social purpose (Regs, s. 160).

Two other activities also need no permit: a charitable liquor auction (Regs, s. 140) and the use of sacramental wine (Regs, s. 141).

What it means for you. If your event meets every part of the private-event test, you can go ahead without a permit. If your event does not meet all of these criteria (for example you charge admission or host your event in a place generally accessible to the public) you will need a Special Occasion Permit.

Example:

- You're hosting your parents' anniversary party in a friend's backyard, still a private residence even though it isn't yours or your parents' home: PRIVATE RESIDENCE, no permit needed.
- You're hosting a retirement party in the Board room of your office which is OF LIMITED PUBLIC ACCESS, you invite a few clients and staff, no admission fee, no alcohol sold: No permit needed.
- You're hosting the same retirement party in a hall you rent in town, the venue itself is open to the public, even if your guest list isn't: PLACE GENERALLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC, you need a Special Occasion Permit.
- You're hosting a birthday party at your own home, but you sell tickets to help cover a live band: PRIVATE RESIDENCE, but you charge for entry, you need a Special Occasion Permit.

What happens next

After the engagement period closes, all feedback will be reviewed and considered. The regulations will then be finalized, and the *Act* and *Regulations* are expected to come into force together.

This guide is a plain-language summary of proposed changes only. Where it differs from the legislation, the official Liquor Act and draft Liquor Regulations govern.