



To the Editor:

I have read several news articles lately on the recent opening of Chill Street, a ferment on premise retail outlet located adjacent to the Sobey's in Elmsdale. It has been called the first of its kind, which I would say is accurate. Chill Street has also been repeatedly referred to as a microbrewery. As President of the Craft Brewers Association of Nova Scotia (CBANS) and the owner of one of the forty craft breweries and brew pubs in Nova Scotia, I say that is just not the case.

A craft brewery is three things: small, independent and traditional. In Nova Scotia, small means that our annual production must be less than 1,500,000 litres of beer. Is Chill Street small? Yes, I believe it is. Independent means not owned by one of the large multinational beer producers. Also, true of Chill Street. But traditional? This is where the similarity ends.

As craft brewers, we make beer in the traditional way: from whole grains, like our brewing predecessors have done for thousands of years. At Boxing Rock, we use primarily malted barley, but sometimes some wheat or rye. When we can, we use malt that has been grown and malted in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Quebec. We crush the grains in a mill, to prepare them for the mashing process. We mash the grains in hot water to create wort. We transfer that wort to the kettle using a process called lautering. We boil the wort and add hops to create flavours. Most of the hops we use have been grown in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Ontario. We cool the wort, and then we transfer it to a fermenter and pitch some yeast. It is the process required to brew unique, flavourful, and traditional beer.

At Chill Street, they open an antiseptically sealed bag of pasteurized, concentrated wort that has been shipped from New Zealand or Germany, dump that in a fermenter and pitch some yeast. They do not handle raw materials. They do not use local ingredients. And as a result, their economic impact is only a fraction of that of a real craft brewery. The hard work is done elsewhere, and the raw materials are not local.

Let's be clear. Although the NSLC has granted a "microbrewery" permit to the Chill Street Store, there is no actual brewing going on in Elmsdale. In the NSLC's policy, a brewery is equivalent to a manufacturer of beer. And the definition goes no further than that. At CBANS, we define a craft brewery as one that makes wort from whole grains using a full mash process – that is, as a facility where brewing occurs in the traditional sense.

Perhaps it seems like semantics from the outside, but it is very important to us. As small-scale manufacturers in Nova Scotia we create jobs and support other industries, in our local community, and across the province. For our investment, we are granted the privilege of a manufacturer's retail store where we can sell direct to the public from our manufacturing

facility. We pay a small fee to the NSLC for this privilege, as well as a remittance (Retail Sales Markup Allowance or RSMA) on all the beer we sell directly. We can only sell from where we manufacture, but this gives us direct access to the market – and we get that access because of the economic impact we create.

This new business model, like Chill Street follows, where imported, concentrated wort is fermented on premise and then given the privileges of a manufacturer is an innovation. But it is not a microbrewery. The economic impact of these facilities does not warrant investment by our government in the same way as actual breweries. The NSLC and the NS government needs to look carefully at this situation, and quickly, because this first store is admittedly a pilot for a much larger roll out across the province if the loophole isn't closed. This is one symptom of a manufacturer's policy that is further and further out of date, and that the industry has been trying to get updated for nearly two years now.

This loophole in outdated policy has the potential to severely damage our industry, and to tarnish the well- deserved reputation of Nova Scotia Craft Beer. I, for one, am going to fight that any way I can. Including taking issue when these businesses are referred to as microbreweries, and continuing to insist that the NSLC and the NS government urgently need to act to support Nova Scotia's Craft Brewers by working with industry to update policy to address this issue.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily Tipton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Emily Tipton  
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President, Craft Brewers Association of Nova Scotia