

BRING-YOUR-OWN ALCOHOL AT OUTDOOR PUBLIC EVENTS: MUNICIPAL GUIDANCE

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The Province of Ontario has introduced a legislative framework permitting municipalities to authorize bring-your-own alcohol (BYOB) at designated outdoor public events. The intent of this initiative is to support local economies by reducing costs for event organizers and attendees, while maintaining appropriate public safety and regulatory controls.

Municipal participation in BYOB is entirely voluntary. BYOB is not automatically permitted and may only occur where:

- The municipality has enacted appropriate bylaw authority;
- The municipality has formally designated the event as eligible; and
- The event organizer has obtained a valid BYOB permit from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO).

Municipalities retain full discretion over whether to participate in the BYOB framework and how BYOB-designated events are regulated locally.

BYOB AT A GLANCE - KEY POINTS FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- BYOB at outdoor public events is enabled by the province but not mandated
- Municipalities must opt in through bylaw authority
- Each eligible event requires municipal designation (by Council or delegated authority) and an AGCO BYOB permit
- BYOB permissions should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, rather than through blanket approvals
- Municipalities retain authority to impose conditions, deny applications, or revoke approvals
- BYOB events may increase municipal liability exposure unless strong governance, safety controls, enforcement and insurance requirements are in place

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT AND EVENT ELIGIBILITY (Provincial Requirements)

Effective April 30, 2026, individuals aged 19 and over may bring and consume their own alcoholic beverages at outdoor public events, subject to the requirements of the *Liquor License and Control Act, 2019 Ontario Regulation 747/21*, where such events are approved by the municipality. [O. Reg. 747/21](#)

[PERMITS | ontario.ca](#)

The amended framework extends BYOB permissions beyond sporting and tailgate events to include municipally designated cultural and community events, such as festivals, farmers' markets, and outdoor movie nights.

To be eligible, events must be outdoor, ground-level public events, formally designated by the municipality (or linked to a qualifying sporting event), and must limit alcohol consumption to approved, clearly defined areas.

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Before BYOB-designated events may occur, municipalities must enact an enabling bylaw permitting alcohol consumption in public places, if not already in place. This should include establishing local eligibility criteria and approval processes integrated with existing event-permitting systems. Each qualifying BYOB event must be formally designated by council or a delegated authority as a cultural or community event. AGCO BYOB permits cannot be issued without proof of such municipal designation, reinforcing the municipality's gatekeeping role.

Municipalities that opt in retain full discretion to:

- Approve or deny BYOB requests
- Impose event specific conditions
- Revoke or suspend permissions where public safety or compliance concerns arise

BYOB approvals should be granted on a case-by-case basis, rather than through blanket authorizations.

Municipalities are encouraged to review existing internal processes, event-permitting frameworks, and Municipal Alcohol Policies (MAPs) to ensure alignment with the amended provincial Regulation. Appropriate controls should be applied consistently to manage increased municipal exposure.

ORGANIZER OBLIGATIONS AND COMPLIANCE (Provincial and Permit Holder Requirements)

BYOB event organizers are legally responsible for complying with all AGCO permit conditions and applicable legislation. At minimum, organizers must:

- Ensure alcohol is consumed only within designated areas
- Prevent alcohol from leaving approved consumption areas
- Ensure alcohol consumption is limited to individuals 19 years of age and older through effective age verification measures (i.e. controlled entry points, wristbands, ID checks)
- Actively prevent service to minors, disorderly conduct, and unsafe or excessive consumption
- Permit unrestricted access for police and AGCO inspectors
- Ensure the permit holder or a formally designated representative is present throughout the event

Failure to comply may result in permit suspension or revocation. The permit holder remains ultimately accountable for meeting all regulatory and permit requirements.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND OPERATIONAL RISK CONTROLS

Municipalities are strongly encouraged to require robust public safety and operational planning as a condition of approval, including:

- Clearly defined alcohol-consumption areas, separated from playgrounds or children programming areas
- Physical or natural controls such as fencing, barriers, and signage
- Measures to prevent alcohol from being removed from permitted areas
- Effective age verification measures (i.e. ID checks, wristbands, controlled entry points)
- Adequate trained staff, volunteers, and security
- Crowd management and site design considerations
- Safe transportation options, including access to public transit access or rideshare services
- Advance coordination with police, bylaw enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services, and public health

Municipalities may also require:

- Submission of a detailed Safety Plan
- Incident Response Plans, including first-aid coverage and protocols for removing disruptive individuals
- Restrictions on container type, size, or quantity where appropriate
- Pre-event and post-event site inspections

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Municipalities approvals should clearly address enforcement expectations, including:

- Compliance with AGCO social-responsibility standards
- Protection of minors through alcohol-free zones
- Noise, nuisance, and bylaw enforcement protocols
- Unrestricted access for enforcement officials

Municipalities should assess whether existing staffing, enforcement capacity and cost recovery mechanisms (i.e. paid duty or dedicated security requirements) are adequate to support BYOB-designated events.

LIABILITY AND INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Allowing BYOB events may increase uncertainty and reduce organizer control over alcohol consumption. Municipalities should not assume that participant-supplied alcohol lowers risk, in many cases it may heighten liability exposure.

To mitigate risk, municipalities should require event organizers to maintain:

- Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance, including Liquor Liability coverage with limits proportionate to the size, scope, and risk profile of the event and activities. As a best practice, events involving alcohol should carry liability limits of not less than \$5,000,000.
- Coverage naming the municipality as an additional insured, with respect to the event.

- Contractual indemnification and hold harmless provisions in favour of the municipality.
- Submission of copies of the AGCO BYOB permit and documentation confirming compliance with Smart Serve certification requirements, as applicable, prior to the event.

The certificate of insurance provided by the event organizer should clearly identify the event date(s), event location, a brief description of the event, and confirmation that the event is a BYOB event, where applicable.

BYOB events may present insurance coverage gaps, as standard event policies may not respond to alcohol-related claims where alcohol is supplied by attendees. Municipalities should confirm that organizers' insurance explicitly addresses risks arising from alcohol consumption, including participant-supplied alcohol.

As owners or occupiers of event sites, municipalities may have exposure under Ontario's *Occupiers' Liability Act*, underscoring the importance of strong site controls, inspections, and clear documentation.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS AND POST-EVENT REVIEW

Municipalities should consider broader community impacts by:

- Maintaining alcohol-free and family-oriented zones
- Clearly communicating where alcohol is and is not permitted
- Enforcing zero tolerance standards for disorderly conduct

Post-event reporting and compliance reviews are encouraged to:

- Address complaints and incidents
- Assess enforcement effectiveness
- Inform future event approvals and policy adjustments

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Province of Ontario has enabled, but not mandated, BYOB at outdoor public events. Municipal discretion, clear governance frameworks, strong safety controls, consistent enforcement, and appropriate insurance requirements remain essential to managing public safety, liability, and reputational risks.

Municipalities are encouraged to carefully assess local readiness before authorizing BYOB-designated events.

BFL CANADA will continue to monitor developments related to BYOB-designated events and provide updates as additional regulatory guidance emerges. For questions or support, please contact your BFL CANADA Public Sector team member.

This information is provided for general guidance only and does not constitute legal advice. Municipalities should refer to the *Liquor Licence and Control Act, 2019 and Ontario Regulation 747/21* for applicable legal requirements.

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