



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

---

1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 88

---

## IMPORTATION OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ACT

Bill to Amend—Second Reading  
of Bill C-311

Speech by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Monday, June 11, 2012

## THE SENATE

Monday, June 11, 2012

### IMPORTATION OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ACT

#### BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I know that the time is late but I did want to say a few words on behalf of all wine lovers in support of Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act. This legislation is long overdue, and I hope to see its swift passage by the Senate.

As a proud home owner and taxpayer in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, one of the epicentres of the Canadian wine industry, I am pleased to support this bill. I have had the opportunity to see the growth and rapid development of the viticulture industry first-hand and I have been proud to see many of the Okanagan's wines attain world-class standards. Much as I love to enjoy British Columbia wines, honourable senators, I have never been able to ship those wines back to Alberta to enjoy at home.

As Senator Runciman has indicated, under federal law it is illegal to move wine across provincial borders unless that wine is exported by the liquor control boards under the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act. As mentioned, this act was passed in 1928 to suppress the bootlegging that was rampant at that time.

I am sure all honourable senators will agree that a prohibition-era law has limited use in 21st century Canada. In fact, it stifles the flourishing economic activity generated by the Canadian wine industry. Wine tourism drives economic activity across many spinoff industries in Canada's wine-growing regions when Canadians travel outside their home province to visit wineries, and it enhances the quality of life of people living in those regions.

A large proportion of Canadian wineries are family owned and run, and the profits of these enterprises are, by and large, reinvested in local communities.

**Senator D. Smith:** Some by former Liberal senators.

**Senator Tardif:** That is right.

Bill C-311 would allow Canadians to bring back wine from their visits to other provinces and to make online purchases.

This bill has been met with enthusiastic support from vintners, small and large, across Canada. Vintners from the well-established British Columbia industry see it as an opportunity to further expand their businesses, while vintners from the blossoming wine industry in Nova Scotia say they need this legislation to kick-start their businesses.

• (2110)

The existing law limits sales and growth for small vineyards and restricts access for consumers. Canadians from across the country should have equal access to the very best in Canadian wines from one coast to the other.

One Nova Scotia vintner, Hans Jost of Jost Vineyards, told media recently that, "Customers ask several times a week if they can ship their wine. We always have to say, 'No, sorry, there is nothing we can do.' There is minimal exposure outside of Nova Scotia for our wine. In Nova Scotia, there is a population of about 960,000, but the same winery in Ontario has a market of 10 million people."

Mr. Jost raises an important point. With a population of less than one million people, it is impossible for the market within Nova Scotia alone to sustain the kind of growth that is possible in the wine industry.

Removing interprovincial trade barriers will allow these vintners to take their businesses to a whole new level.

I would be remiss if I did not share with you, honourable senators, that even my own home province of Alberta boasts three wineries: the En Santé winery in Brosseau, the Roaming River Ranches in Lethbridge; and Field Stone Fruit Wines in Strathmore.

[*Translation*]

I recently had the great pleasure of discovering another of Canada's wine regions. Last week, Senator Nolin hosted a reception that featured consumer goods from Quebec. A few grape growers from southern Quebec were there, including some from the region of my dear colleague, Senator Carignan, Saint-Eustache.

The vineyards are concentrated in the regions of the Basses-Laurentides and the Eastern Townships. Although the wine industry is relatively small and unknown in Canada, it is growing exponentially, to the surprise of many. The number of producers increased from five in 1985 to 50 in 2008. Logically, it makes sense that Quebec's wine industry would be more successful if these wines could more easily cross provincial borders.

Honourable senators, it is interesting to note that wine production in Canada is nothing new. In 1535, Jacques Cartier identified *vitis riparia* wine grapes in abundance on the island he called Île Bacchus, now known as Île d'Orléans. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain started planting French grape varieties, including *vitis vinifera* in that same area.

[*English*]

Today there are more than 500 wineries in Canada within six provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

It is almost hard to believe that such a nonsensical law exists today. It is easier for Canadians to import wine from another country than it is to import wine from another province. As an example, if one were to make the short trip from Prince Edward Island to a winery in Nova Scotia, one could not bring wine back home with them. However, were one to take a trip to France, one would be free to bring home a bottle of Bordeaux to enjoy later.

How did we get to a point where there is a greater trade barrier between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia than there is between Canada and France or Italy? If we have the best interests of Canadian businesses at heart, we should address this bizarre situation without delay.

The implementation of Bill C-311 will remove one of the key barriers to the growth and prosperity of the Canadian wine

industry. This exemption would be for personal use only and not for commercial purposes, and provinces and territories would each decide what the individual import limit would be.

Honourable senators, I hope you will join me in supporting sending Bill C-311 to committee for further study.

---