



Proposed Changes to the Rural Agency Store Program

British Columbia Liquor Distribution Branch

March 15, 2002



Background

- Rural Agency Stores (RAS) are intended to make beverage alcohol available in rural communities where a government liquor store is not viable
- There are currently 144 RAS in British Columbia



RAS Financial Information

- Total beverage alcohol sales were \$1.719 billion
- RAS sales were \$51.8 million in 2000/01
- Average sales per RAS were \$360,000
- RAS sales ranged from a low of \$26,000 to a high of \$2.1 million



Current RAS Criteria

- Existing criteria established in 1987
 - Minimum distance of 20 km from another liquor retail outlet
 - Evidence of a self-contained “community”
 - At least one eligible business (grocery store)
- Process includes consultation with residents, police, local government, and First Nations as applicable



Issues with Current Criteria

- Majority of proposals fail due to distance or community criteria
- Minister is often asked to exercise discretion
- There are rural communities in British Columbia with significant populations that fail to meet the criteria



2001 Consultant's Review

- Reviewed practices in other provinces.
- Consulted with interested stakeholders
- Recommended change to location criteria
- Recommended removal of Minister's involvement in granting RAS



Recommendations

- Change the location criteria, to two categories:
 - **Rural communities**
(Minimum population of 300)
 - **Tourist destination resorts**
(Eg. ski resort with residences and guest accommodations)
- Minister authorize the LDB General Manager to make RAS appointments