



Special Occasion Permits – Reception Events

Licensee information sheets from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario

What is a Special Occasion Permit?

A Special Occasion Permit (SOP) is required *any time* liquor is offered for sale or served anywhere other than in a licensed establishment or a private place (for example, a corporate boardroom) or a residence.

SOPs are issued for occasional special events only, and not to operate an ongoing business.

While there are different types of special occasion permits, the most common type is a reception permit. This tip sheet provides information specific to reception permits.

Reception Special Occasion Permits

Reception SOPs are typically issued for events such as weddings, funerals, bridal showers, stag and does, etc.

Receptions are private events for invited guests only and the event must not be advertised to the public by way of flyers, newspaper, internet or radio. The event cannot be open to the general public.

Reception Special Occasion Permits can be either a Sale permit (to allow for recovery of the cost of serving liquor) or a No Sale permit (which allows liquor to be served, but not sold, and the permit holder is responsible for the cost of the liquor entirely).

Under a Reception SOP, no profit can be made from the sale of alcohol.

Reception SOP – “Sale”

A *Sale SOP* is issued when money is collected directly for liquor through:

- liquor sales (cash bar),
- an admission charge to the event which covers the cost of liquor, or
- liquor tickets sold to people attending the event.

If money is collected before the event, a Sale SOP may be required if the money is collected to cover the cost of liquor.

Note: A reception event cannot be conducted for personal profit through the sale of liquor. Anyone intending to operate an ongoing business and/or serve liquor for personal profit must obtain a liquor sales licence.

Reception SOP – “No Sale”

A *No Sale SOP* is issued when:

- liquor is served without charge, or
- no money is collected for liquor from guests either before or during the event.

No Sale SOPs do not allow for any transaction of money between the permit holder and guests, to contribute to the cost of liquor.

Applicants for *No Sale SOPs* must state on the application that individuals attending the event will not be paying for the cost of liquor.

Responsibilities of an SOP Holder

Regulation 389/91 under the *Liquor Licence Act* sets out the requirements for the sale and service of alcohol under a Special Occasion Permit. The following are some of the key responsibilities of a reception permit holder.

- The regular hours for the sale and service of liquor under an SOP are 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. the following day, except for New Year's Eve (December 31) when sale and service of liquor under an SOP must cease at 3 a.m. the next day (January 1). However, the Registrar may restrict the hours of sale and service as a condition of the permit.
- government store (LCBO, The Beer Store or authorized winery or brewery retail stores) is allowed to be served or consumed at the event.

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- Homemade wine and beer (including any made at a ferment on premise facility) *may only be served but not sold* at a wedding or other recognized religious event. This must be stated on the permit. The wine or beer must be made by a member of the family hosting the event. The permit holder may not sell the wine or beer.
- Liquor sold or served may not be removed from the premises by any person attending the event. Only the host may remove unused liquor at the conclusion of the event.
- Liquor cannot be sold or served or provided to any person under 19 years of age.
- Proper identification must be checked for any person who appears to be under 19 years of age.
- Intoxication and/or disorderly conduct are not permitted at an SOP function.
- Practices which may encourage the immoderate consumption of alcohol are not permitted. Contests or games involving the consumption of liquor are not permitted, and non-alcoholic beverages must be available.
- Liquor cannot be awarded as a prize for any game or contest.
- Guests cannot be required to purchase a minimum number of drinks (or drink tickets) to enter or remain at the event, and no drink containing more than 85ml of spirits can be sold or served.
- There must be sufficient food available to serve the people in attendance.
- Liquor can only be sold and served during the hours that are stated on the permit.
- All signs of sale and service must be cleared from the premises within 45 minutes of the end time stated on the permit. This includes the removal of all partially consumed and empty bottles, and glasses that contained liquor.
- The Special Occasion Permit must be available for inspection.
- The levy, as verified on alcohol purchase receipts, must be available for inspection.
- The Permit Holder or his/her designate (the person indicated on the reverse side of the permit) must be present at the event at all times.
- Police officers and AGCO Inspectors must be given unobstructed access to the event at all times in order to conduct inspections or investigations.
- Gambling: Games of chance or mixed chance and skill (i.e., poker, crown & anchor, raffles, 50/50 draws, etc.) *are not permitted* unless the proper licence has been obtained from the province or municipality. Such licences are only issued to eligible organizations with charitable or religious purposes.

Other Important Information

- Leftover liquor must be removed from the premises at the end of the event. When returning unopened alcohol purchased from a government store, you must produce the Special Occasion Permit and a copy of the sales receipt (check with the LCBO or The Beer Store for more details).
- The police or an AGCO Inspector may cancel a Special Occasion Permit while the event is underway if he or she reasonably believes that the *Liquor Licence Act* or regulations are being contravened in connection with the event, or if there is a serious public safety risk.
- Permit holders can learn how to lower their liability risks by taking the Smart Serve™ program and hire servers who have taken the course (or a licensed caterer). For more information on Smart Serve, call 416.695.8737 or toll free at 1 877.620.6082 or visit their website at www.smartserve.ca.