March 16, 2021

Dear Licensees,

The last year, really the time since the pandemic descended on Oregon in March of 2020, the way we live, the way we work, the way we interact has turned upside down. The OLCC has had to adapt and pivot to make changes to ensure the survivability during the pandemic and the viability post pandemic, of the industries we regulate.

It’s been a lot of change. All at once. And most of it not planned for. Even as we’ve navigated these short-term adjustments we’ve also worked to maintain our focus on completing longer term investments in the processes and tools we as regulators, and you as licensees, need to use to operate more effectively, efficiently and profitably.

One of the tools we’re now launching is Oregon Privilege Tax Online (OPTO) which streamlines the reporting, reconciliation and auditing for the state’s privilege tax program. The OLCC has been working on this modernization project since 2018 and will phase it in through the end of 2022. We’ve started with wholesalers, this summer will work with brewers and brew pubs, and this fall will blend in wineries.

In the long run this new system will do more than just save you time in reporting your taxable activity to OLCC. It reduces paperwork – you won’t have to mail paper invoices to us. By entering your data yourselves, it will eliminate misinterpretations by OLCC staff and speed up the reconciliation of supplier and wholesaler privilege tax information; this will enable the timely resolution of discrepancies leading to a reduction of potential penalties and interest charges.

OPTO will allow for better tracking of payments and credits, and enables you to make ACH payments through your bank or credit union. We also expect that this will speed up the pace of audits which have been pushed out as far as five years instead of the targeted three year cycle.

We don’t expect anyone to master this improvement change overnight. Working with software developers it took our Financial Services team many months to put this system together. They envisioned it – not just from a regulator’s perspective, but from a licensee’s perspective.

We’re continuing to update the OPTO section of our website with additional information and training materials. And through this phase-in process our Financial Services staff will help you navigate the new system, troubleshoot technology problems (they’ve been doing that already), and take your input on how to continue to improve the system to make it work for you.

There’s a learning curve with OPTO that will flatten over time as it becomes more familiar for both of us. As we make this transition, please don’t hesitate to contact me to let me know how we can optimize OPTO in your business environment to make your operations more successful.

Sincerely,

Steve Marks
OLCC Executive Director