

Canadian Business

A pub by any other name; Will the Firkin formula work down south?

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The Firkin Group of Pubs, Canada's largest pub chain, has plans for some serious firkin growth. The group, which currently rings in about ██████████ in annual sales from 38 pubs in Ontario and two in British Columbia, has partnered with Fransmart, an American franchise development company, to tap the U.S. market. Firkin hopes to launch 100 new locations and boost sales to ██████████ over the next five years.

But here's the question on the fuzzy minds of beer guzzlers nationwide: how the heck are they going to come up with 100 more "(blank) and Firkin" names? Stanley Adelson, Firkin's president and the man with sole naming power, says he's not willing to venture into obscurity. Unlike in England, where the Firkin name originated, Adelson promises to spare North Americans from such names as "Philanthropist and Firkin" and "Pharmacy and Firkin." "Our customers just wouldn't be able to get into that kind of name," he says.

With the exception of a "Fox and Firkin" in both Ontario and B.C., the group has so far given each of its locations an original moniker. That will continue in Ontario. "Ontario will never duplicate," says Adelson. "We've just opened the 'Gull' and the 'Loon.' We've run out of Fs and PHs, but we'll carry on with unique names."

What about all those new U.S. locations? Not to worry, says Adelson. "We've reversed the name in the States. We think that, from a marketing point of view, 'Firkin and Pheasant' has more pull than 'Pheasant and Firkin.' We'll use the 'Firkin' first." Beyond that, the group will simply start with the Fs and PHs and move down the list, borrowing the Ontario names. Problem solved.

With the recent addition of a director of international development, the Firkin Group is also eyeing expansion into other countries. "We haven't found the match that we're looking for yet," says marketing director Larry Isaacs. "But that's not to say that we won't end up in Argentina with 20 locations one day." In the meantime, we'll all have to wait for the Firkin and Gaucho.

FYI: a firkin is a wooden cask equivalent in volume to half a kilderkin, or about 41 litres.

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