

# Big Beer Barley Belt Brand Battle Brews

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In a story that seems tailor made for alliterative headlines, the recent acquisition of Calgary's Banded Peak Brewing by Labatt Breweries of Canada has raised questions about the fate of the trademark BARLEY BELT.

Banded Peak Brewing applied to register the trademark in Canada in 2018 as part of a **cooperative marketing effort** among the small-scale craft brewers in the neighbourhood, including Banded Peak, Cabin Brewing, Annex Ale, Born Colorado, Confluence, Establishment, Legend 7, O.T., Paddy's and Village Brewery. In other words, some of the heavy hitters of the Calgary craft beer scene.

Last month, after Banded Peak left the ranks of the small-scale craft brewers and joined the Labatt family, the trademark appears to have fallen into the hands of big beer.

Labatt has reportedly indicated that it intends to assist with the creation of a **Barley Belt Association**, which would take over ownership of the brand, and continue the joint marketing efforts. Whether Labatt gets to join the association remains to be seen. In interviews with CBC, local brewers have expressed that they prefer to keep the party local. Labatt in fact is a subsidiary of global beverage colossus Anheuser-Busch InBev SA, a company with global revenue of \$54.62 billion USD.

**AB InBev** boasts that it is the "number one craft beer brewer around the world" (see their 2018 Annual Report, dated March 22, 2019), with such niche brands as Budweiser, Corona, Stella Artois, Labatt Blue and a growing regional craft portfolio, such as Goose Island, and now Banded Peak.

It tends to stretch the meaning of the phrase "craft beer brewer", but hey, no use arguing with \$54 billion in sales.

The BARLEY BELT might have to tighten a notch, and come up with some creative ways to continue their co-branding efforts.

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