

## 1. Limit alcohol outlet density

Higher outlet density means higher rates of alcohol consumption and increased rates of violence and other harms.

### Municipal governments can

- ☑ Strengthen local zoning regulations to supplement provincial government limits in order to
  - avoid clustering of outlets and avert intense competition among them
  - reduce or avoid congestion in and around outlets and lower the likelihood of altercations
- ☑ Evaluate every licence application and contest those that could adversely impact a neighbourhood
  - review the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch (LCLB) document, *Role of Local Government and First Nations in the Provincial Liquor Licensing Process*
  - provide resolutions to the LCLB regarding specific issues and concerns around particular applications
- ☑ Promote health by ensuring the community offers alternatives in entertainment, recreation and socializing
  - assess local areas for amount and quality of venues that provide non-drinking forms of leisure activity

### Some questions to consider

- ? Do our present zoning laws differentiate between types of liquor operations (e.g., retail stores, liquor-primary, food-primary)?
- ? Do we require applicants to submit a plan addressing business strategy, security provisions, noise management?
- ? Do our present regulations adequately limit the size of premises and numbers of patrons?
- ? How will the proximity of licensed stores or on-premise establishments bear on a particular area or neighbourhood? Has an impact study been conducted in regard to a new application?

Research shows that higher outlet density makes for elevated rates of excessive alcohol consumption and increased levels of violence and other harms. Particularly with the bunching of on-premise establishments – sometimes compounded by price wars among competitive business owners – the result can readily be that of more people causing or falling victim to accidents, fights, vandalism, etc. (Livingston et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2009; Popova et al., 2009).

In BC, the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch (LCLB) enforces regulations aimed at limiting off-premise outlet clustering. For example, the minimum distance requirement between licensed private retail stores is 0.5 km (or 10 km for rural agency stores). A moratorium on new private stores was imposed in 2006 (following their rapid proliferation after being allowed in 2002). When it comes to on-premise outlets, the LCLB regulates the service industry through the issuing of two kinds of licences: liquor-primary licences (for bars, pubs and nightclubs) and food-primary licences (for cafes and restaurants).

Local government zoning regulations are probably more important influences on outlet density than provincial restrictions, especially for bars and restaurants that serve alcohol.

Source: Perry Kendall, *Report from the Provincial Health Officer*, 2008.

## 2. Confine hours of service

Extended late-night hours encourage heavier alcohol use and result in increased violence and harm in and around alcohol-serving establishments.

Municipal governments can

- ☑ Maintain or reinstate a 2 a.m. closure for on-premise licensed establishments
  - review current regulations regarding hours of operation and take steps to implement desired changes using provisions made through the LCLB
- ☑ Consider requirement of earlier closure (e.g., 12 a.m.) on Sunday through Thursday
  - conduct a needs assessment that includes consultation with stakeholders
  - follow the appropriate process to make earlier closing official (if it is desirable)
- ☑ Take into account neighbourhood features and factors
  - create a checklist of factors to evaluate neighbourhoods when judging feasibility of hours of operation
- ☑ Seek voluntary agreement on rotating staggered hours of closure
  - talk with liquor-primary operators collectively about the advantages, obstacles and implementation of rotating staggered closing times so that not all are open late every night

Some questions to consider

- ? Do the economic and social benefits of later business hours outweigh the potential harm to patrons, neighbourhood residents, and the community at large?
- ? Would expansion of hours answer legitimate needs (e.g., limited opportunity to frequent an establishment owing to work schedule) so much as it would be conducive to unhealthy lifestyles and problems (e.g., personal, relat l(e, l(nalci-4.2i1.0019 Te oph st0019 Tehos7.6(n)po.geen
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### 3. Limit alcohol-allowed public events

Questioning the need for alcohol service at certain events can help prevent alcohol-related incidents and increase public safety.

Municipal governments can

- Develop a civic alcohol policy
  - review past local experience of (and effectiveness in) managing alcohol-permitted events
  - examine provincial regulations pertaining to special occasion licences (public and private) and management policies produced by other municipalities
  - collect adequate expression of collective and individual community stakeholder opinion around allowance or not of drinking in connection with municipally-run facilities and events
  - craft a municipal alcohol policy that draws on the MAP model developed in Ontario
  - lay out a strategy for implementation, enforcement and refinement of the policy
  - be consistent in applying the values incorporated in the policy to particular applications

Some questions and applications

### Resource links:

Liquor Control and Licensing Branch (LCLB). Available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/branch/index.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/branch/index.htm)

What everyone should know about BC's liquor laws. Available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/basics.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/basics.htm)

Role of Local Government and First Nations in the Provincial Liquor Licensing Process. Available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/docs-forms/PSSG-LocalGovt-Fst-Nation.pdf](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/docs-forms/PSSG-LocalGovt-Fst-Nation.pdf)

Municipal Alcohol Policy Guide. Order form available at: <http://orfa.com/orfaoldweb/MAP/MAP%20Guide.pdf>

### Reference material:

Babor, T., Caetano, R., Casswell, S., Edwards, G., Giesbrecht, N., Graham, K. et al. (2010). *Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and public policy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp.127-146). New York: Oxford.

## Ensuring Safer Drinking Environments

Some of the key factors in addressing alcohol-related harm involve “context” or the conditions in which alcohol is being consumed (i.e., where, when, and why alcohol is being served). In two important ways, municipal governments can help improve the safety conditions of public drinking environments.

### 1. Regulate public special-occasion events

Without careful management of public festivities that include drinking, these celebrations can lead to various harms associated with excessive consumption. Provincial regulations should be augmented by local initiatives in an effort to better protect people in attendance from getting sick, having an accident, experiencing violence or causing trouble for others.

Municipal governments can

- ☑ Get familiar with BC regulations pertaining to special occasion licences (public and private)
  - learn the rules regarding liquor distribution
  - understand the Serving It Right program
- ☑ Craft a special events policy regarding alcohol
  - list community venues and events where alcohol can (or cannot) be served
  - outline management practices that must be followed prior to and during an event
  - specify prevention strategies to be employed in conjunction with an alcohol-serving event
  - describe enforcement procedures and penalties for non-compliance
  - provide details regarding signage required to attract safety measures
- ☑ Develop a plan for strengthening community support for the local policy and for evaluating its ongoing effectiveness
- ☑ Ensure hosts of special occasions are aware of their policy and licensing obligations
  - develop and distribute a policy handbook
- ☑ Improve quality control at alcohol-serving events
  - require that an authorized municipal representative be present at a special event to monitor compliance, administer enforcement and report results

Penticton learned a lot from Wakefest 2007, where event-goers went on a free-for-all at local nightclubs, leading to 150 people being arrested and more than 200 people receiving liquor-related tickets. Penticton’s municipal government made a series of in-depth changes to their alcohol policy in preparation for hosting Wakefest in 2008. These changes included putting \$50,000 toward additional policing during the event, scheduling the event at the end of June instead of during March 13, 2008. w 0 8 Tw 0 -1. 66 T

Some questions to consider

- ? Has the event host fulfilled all commitments for necessary arrangements beforehand?
- ? Are any additional precautionary measures appropriate for a given event?
- ? Is there enough event management staff to preside over alcohol-related proceedings? Are they adequately prepared to deal with alcohol-related issues?
- ? Are stipulated harm prevention strategies in place?

The most rigorous model for implementing special regulations can be found in the Municipal Alcohol Policy (MAP) program developed in Ontario. It has been drawn up to facilitate adoption by communities. It can be ordered from ORFA (Ontario Recreational Facilities Association), and with CAMH (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) in constructing and publishing that tool. The most recent report from BC's Provincial Health Officer recommends that the MAP thrust be considered for application in BC (Kendall, 2008, pp. 39, 47).

## 2. Improve on-premise venues

The risk of harm to patrons increases at alcohol-serving establishments that lack safety regulations and feature few prevention measures. Reducing harm, therefore, may require improving the conditions of alcohol-serving outlets such as bars, pubs, nightclubs and restaurants.

Municipal governments can

- Make sure design standards are rigorous enough to reduce the likelihood of alcohol-related harm
  - interiors are well-lit, well-ventilated, with clear accessible pathways and exits to avoid congestion
  - washrooms are adequately sized and clean
  - comfortable seating arranged on multiple levels to facilitate monitoring by staff and customers
  - tempered glassware
  - exteriors have ample lighting, security cameras, and clean clear sidewalk space that provides enough room for relaxed line-ups
- Collaborate with alcohol-serving establishments
  - develop mutual agreements on a common code of practice and a commitment to shared public safety strategies among outlets
  - encourage outlets to provide high quality entertainment, suitable food options, alternative beverage (low-strength beer, soft drinks and water) at lower cost, free non-alcoholic drinks for designated drivers, and safe-ride assistance
  - encourage and support on-premise establishments in implementing the Safe Bars program, which can help staff diffuse volatile situations and avert violence
  - seek agreement on how increased visible police presence might help to enhance security at certain time slots or in special situations
- Collaborate with provincial inspectors and local police
  - develop a plan to help inspectors and local police ensure that service standards and other requirements (e.g., not allowing overcrowding) are met in an ongoing manner
  - consider using police-sanctioned "pseudo-patrons" to check adherence to prohibitions concerning minors

- work together with police, emergency personnel and LCLB inspectors to establish joint action in collection, sharing and follow-up of information regarding place of “last drink” and addressing alcohol-related risks and dangers (e.g., driving while impaired, violent incidents)

Some questions to consider

- ? What has our municipality done to encourage licensed establishments to mutually assume greater responsibility for providing safer drinking environments?
- ? How has our municipality shown leadership in working with other stakeholders (e.g., police, health, LCLB) to respond to alcohol-related episodes in the community?

A substantial measure to lower the likelihood of harm in alcohol-serving outlets is the provincial imposition of the responsible beverage service program, *Serving it Right*. The primary focus of the program is to discourage sales and service to minors, and to those either approaching or already at a stage of intoxication. It also aims to guide staff further in fulfilling duty of care to impaired patrons. Besides a training component for staff, the program provides direction for management, since managerial support is crucial for continuing staff compliance with service standards. Even more decisive is external monitoring and enforcement (Stockwell, 2008; Babor et al., 2010).

The LCLB administers the program through the agency (the human resources association for BC tourism) and conducts regular inspections of existing licensed premises, with a published process for dealing with alleged contraventions (of service and other obligations) and exercising enforcement penalties. This arrangement allows local police and municipal governments to register concerns about non-compliance with regional inspectors and be part of a meeting speaking to that complaint (if one is held at a stage before a more formal enforcement hearing).

Grande Prairie’s Safe City Nights Program is based on the idea that increasing police presence on certain occasions saves money and lives in the long run. A pilot program in 2004, Safe City Nights was so successful that it is now a permanent tool used to reduce inappropriate behaviours in and around Grande Prairie’s late-night bars and night clubs.

Source: City of Grande Prairie 2005 State of the City Address

## Steps to Success

How is Our Community Doing?

- We have a well-designed special events policy that is adhered to for all events that are served
- Our design standards for facilities serve alcohol incorporate all features recognized as generally conducive to a safer drinking experience
- We do regular enforcement checks to monitor compliance with service standards
- Service staff regularly participate in on-premise violence prevention training
- We have developed voluntary agreements among licensees to publicly commit to specific measures that contribute to a safer experience in their premises
- A partnership of relevant public services exists, with the goal of working together to prevent and respond to incidents of harm arising from drinking in licensed establishments

## Resource links:

Liquor Control and Licensing Branch (LCLB). Available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/branch/index.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/branch/index.htm)

What everyone should know about BC's liquor laws. Available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/basics.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/basics.htm)

Role of Local Government and First Nations in the Provincial Liquor Licensing Process. Available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/docs-for/PSSG-LocalGovt-Fst-Nation.pdf](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/docs-for/PSSG-LocalGovt-Fst-Nation.pdf)

Special occasion licence. Information available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/poly/special/index.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/poly/special/index.htm)

Municipal Alcohol Policy Guide. Order form available at: <http://orfa.com/orfaoldweb/MAP/MAP%20Guide.pdf>

Serving it Right. Information available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/serving\\_it\\_right.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/serving_it_right.htm)



## Reducing Drinking and Driving

While strong, broad policy stances at the federal and provincial levels are most critical for lowering drinking and driving rates, local governments can play an important two-fold role in strengthening community protection and fostering collective responsibility to further reduce harm.

### 1. Enhance enforcement

Civic officials can make a significant cont

## 2. Shape public attitudes

Local authorities can lead their communities toward fuller endorsement of healthier stances regarding impaired driving.

Municipal governments can

- ; Plan and promote safe transportation to and from drinking establishments
  - f assess how public transit might better serve remote locations and make necessary adjustments
  - f encourage licensees to supply ride services, pre-designated-driver practices, publicize bus and taxi options, and persuade patrons to call family/friends for assistance when needed
  - f support and solicit sponsorship for seasonal services such as Nez Rouge (Operation Red Nose)
- ; Promote social norms against drinking and driving
  - f promote mass media campaigns that encourage social responsibility (in terms of behaviour and reporting violations) and healthier shared norms
  - f maintain restrictions on alcohol advertising and sponsorships (see resource 4 in this set)
  - f encourage local businesses to reinforce to their employees the unacceptability of driving after drinking
  - f support schools in supplying traffic safety education that includes interactive skill development in resisting pressures to drink and drive (or ride with impaired driver) and in engaging parents
  - f develop and implement strategies for strengthening the community (see resource 5 in this set)
- ; Collaborate with local health and social service providers to encourage screening and brief intervention for risky alcohol use and improve further care for people with alcohol-related problems
  - f include brief intervention specifically related to impaired driving and remedial skill support to prevent recidivism among those apprehended for driving while impaired

Some questions to consider

- ? What avenues and actions can we explore to feature and increase uptake of safer ride alternatives?
- ? What partnerships have we formed and what strategies are we implementing to discourage drinking and driving?
- ? How well are we contrasting the acceptability of moderate social drinking and the unacceptability of impaired driving?
- ? Are we clearly conveying key messages about drinking and driving issues, (e.g., that even modest amounts of alcohol impair, that most of us don't drive under the influence, that we are all affected by those who do drink and drive, that we all have the opportunity to help make a positive difference)?
- ? How well are we appealing to constructive capacity in individuals and within the community rather than simply playing on fear?

Alternative transport promotion and provision is a challenge. Extra incentives (e.g., free non-alcoholic beverages) need to be offered to designated drivers to help compensate rather than relative moderation. Increased presence of security personnel may be required to encourage more people to use public transit.

Achieving public buy-in on active shared vigilance against impaired driving is a major undertaking that requires patient effort on the part of a local government and fellow stakeholders. Public support for protective measures is there and can be made firmer.

Mass media campaigns conducted with clear focus and strong exposure, whether drawing attention to legal initiatives to deter impaired driving or raising the consciousness of its personal and social costs and inviting participatory actions that will discourage it, can foster further approval of countermeasures. Social norms marketing should seek to undermine inflated impressions of common acceptance for drinking and driving by highlighting the substantial proportion of the public that does not condone it. In order to correct perception and encourage alignment with the actual norm, initiatives need to be sustained, conspicuous, credible (substantiated by solid survey), concise, positive in accent and consistent.

Communities that engage in multi-component strategies that combine enhanced enforcement and educational media advocacy can expect to see a reduction in occurrence of impaired driving and its harmful consequences.

## Steps to Success

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### Resource links:

Arrive Alive, Drink Sober (Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving). Available at [www.arrivealive.org](http://www.arrivealive.org)

Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. Available at: [pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/impaired-driving/index.htm](http://pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/impaired-driving/index.htm)

Drinking and driving (ICBC). Available at [www.icbc.com/road-safety/safer-drivers/drinking-driving](http://www.icbc.com/road-safety/safer-drivers/drinking-driving)

Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Available at [www.madd.ca](http://www.madd.ca)

### Reference material:

Babor, T., Caetano,

## Limiting Alcohol Advertising

Promotion of alcohol through advertising and sponsorship leads to increased consumption and added toll on public well-being. Communities can take action to mitigate this adverse impact.

### 1. Pursue local regulation

Municipal governments can

- ; Limit local advertising
  - f* impose constraints on the number of approved advertising locations
  - f* limit overall amount of advertising
  - f* define maximum size of signage
  - f* define appropriate content
- ; Approve and apply restrictions on civic events
  - f* limit sponsorship by alcohol industry interests
  - f* reduce publicity that draws attention to drinking opportunities
- ; Discourage “cheap alcohol” sales
  - f* encourage drinking establishments to avoid offering drink deals (e.g., discounts on certain days/times, lower prices for larger-sized servings)

Some questions to consider

- ? Do we recognize the alcohol industry as contributing to the culture and economy of the community, but also recognize the need to limit marketing in view of the potential for harm?
- ? What impression does our current stance on advertising give the public? That alcoholic beverages are widely and readily available, hugely popular, a central feature of social interaction and a care-free commodity? Or that alcohol is a legitimate contributor to festivity (though not indispensable for it) but also a drug that must be managed with care?
- ? Do we enforce Liquor Control and Licensing Board (CLB) requirements on local advertising, supplemented by demands reflecting our concern to give drinking a modest, not major, profile?
- ? Do we have a shared sense of public responsibility to discourage excessive consumption?

Marketing has a strong impact on alcohol consumption. Greater exposure to alcohol promotion (including advertising) increases the likelihood of initiation and heavier drinking, among youth in particular (Anderson et al., 2009; Hastings et al., 2005; Collins 2007). Studies show that the provision of cheaper alcohol attracts consumers and leads to faster, heavier drinking and consequently, elevated harms. Asking retail outlets to reject such marketing (and perhaps also align with other safety measures) should include how such a stance can enhance the profile of their operation as one where patrons are responsible and are unlikely to engage in behaviour that disrupts or harms others.

## 2. Support counter-advertising

### Municipal governments can

- ; Promote a balanced outlook on drinking
  - f avoid messaging that gives the impression drinking is common and popular than it actually is
  - f resist coming across as averse to alcohol (demonizing it can unwittingly make it more attractive)
  - f avoid being so information-heavy as to seem humdrum and boring
  - f reject a simplistic stance or questions that suggests arbitrariness and artificiality
  - f avoid scare tactics (playing on fear can desensitize the audience, hinder reflection and reduce efficacy)
- ; Reach out to young people
  - f develop communication products that engage youth by demonstrating care and concern for their health, appreciation of their culture and respect for their capacity to make good choices
  - f recognize them as contributing participants in community life
- ; Use a variety of communication tools including traditional and new media

### Some questions to consider

- ? Have we been able to strike a balance in our messaging around alcohol, reflecting both an appreciation for social benefits and concerns about harms?
- ? Have we addressed common expectancies, motivations and situational prompters for drinking, and shown awareness of issues around them? Have we proposed realistic alternatives?
- ? Have we offered considerations favouring non-use and protective behavioural strategies that serve to reduce risk and experience of harm?
- ? Do we consciously try to undermine a common but artificial and unhelpful dissociation between what is really true and what is truly fun in connection with drinking?

Locally financed counter-promotion will always be at a real disadvantage to marketing conducted by the alcohol industry in view of the enormous disparity in available funding. The industry's affluence has allowed it to do sophisticated research and analysis on factors that deliver appeal and influence behaviour.

Various streams of messaging that run in the opposite direction to the huge waves of promotion endorsing use of alcohol will not off-set the full force of those tidal currents. But persistent strategic communication that aims at being an engaging reality check can at least serve as a meaningful counterpoint. Initiatives to encourage critical reflection on commercial "selling" tactics can be useful too (as opposed

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- ; Request new national standards related to
  - f* volume or quantity of advertisements allowed
  - f* places and types of media in which advertisements can be carried out
  - f* time slots in which it is permitted on television (in order to cut down on youth exposure)
  - f* content that is permissible in promoting the product
  - f* health messages that need to be included
  - f* internet marketing of alcohol under the auspices of Canadian-based operations

### Some questions to consider

- ? Do we encourage consumers to question alcohol sales pitches?
- ? Have we expressed dissatisfaction with the pervasiveness of alcohol advertising, given the harmful consequences of such massive exposure?
- ? Have we protested the largely one-sided nature of alcohol advertising by producers, which gives little recognition of harmful outcomes for various inappropriate patterns of use (not only those associated with severe dependence)?

Media advertising is subject to federal stipulations, with provincial regulations also applying to various forms of alcohol promotion. There is opportunity at both federal and provincial levels for public complaint to be registered over perceived non-compliance with official standards, though there are limitations in access to information about the extent of such complaints and enforcement response to them (Kendall, 2008). At the national level, alcohol

## Resource links

Liquor advertising (LCLB). Information available at: [www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/advertising.htm](http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/lclb/LLinBC/advertising.htm)

Code for Broadcast Advertising of Alcoholic Beverages. Available at: [www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/GENERAL/CODES/ALCOHOL.HTM](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/GENERAL/CODES/ALCOHOL.HTM)

Advertising Standards Canada. Available at: [www.adstandards.com](http://www.adstandards.com)

ASC Alcoholic Beverage Advertising Clearance Guide. Available at:

[www.adstandards.com/en/Clearance/AlcoholicBeverages/ASCAlcoholicBeverageAdvertisingClearanceGuide.pdf](http://www.adstandards.com/en/Clearance/AlcoholicBeverages/ASCAlcoholicBeverageAdvertisingClearanceGuide.pdf)

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Chen, M.-J., Grube, J.W., Bersamin, M., Waiters, E. & DeF (2005). Alcohol advertising: What makes it attractive to youth? *Journal of Health Communication*, 10(6), 553-565.

Collins, R.L., Ellickson, P.L., McCay, D. & Hambarsoomians, J. (2007). Early adolescent exposure to alcohol advertising and its relationship to underage drinking. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(6), 527-534.

Hastings, G., Anderson, S., Cook, J. & Gordon, R. (2005). Alcohol advertising and marketing and young people's drinking: a review of the research. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 26(3), 296-311.

Kendall, P.R.W. (2008). *Public health approach to alcohol policy: Antelope report from the Provincial Health Officer*. Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport. Available at: [www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2008/alcoholpolicyreview.pdf](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2008/alcoholpolicyreview.pdf)

National Alcohol Strategy Working Group (2007). *Reducing alcohol-related harm in Canada: Toward a culture of moderation. Recommendations for a National Alcohol Strategy*. Available at: [www.ccsa.ca/2007%20CCSA%20Documents/ccsa-023876-2007.pdf](http://www.ccsa.ca/2007%20CCSA%20Documents/ccsa-023876-2007.pdf)

Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection (2009). *Literature review – Effects of alcohol advertising on alcohol consumption among youth*. Available at: [www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/publications/AlcoholAdvertisingLiteratureReview.pdf](http://www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/publications/AlcoholAdvertisingLiteratureReview.pdf)

Perkins, H.W., Linkenbach, J., Lewis, M.A. & Neighbors, C. (2010). Effectiveness of social norms media marketing in reducing drinking and driving: A statewide campaign. *Addictive Behaviors*, 35(10), 866-874.

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) (2010). *Alcohol advertising, marketing and promotion*. Available at: [www.vaada.org.au/resources/items/314236-upload-00001.pdf](http://www.vaada.org.au/resources/items/314236-upload-00001.pdf)

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## Strengthening the Community

Communities with a sense of connectedness—including a common concern about alcohol-related harm—tend to be stronger and healthier. Local governments can strengthen communities by promoting both responsible attitudes toward alcohol and moderate drinking practices, and by encouraging more effective care for those requiring support for problems related to alcohol.

### 1. Enhance connectedness

## 2. Raise consciousness

While education efforts on their own have generally failed to produce change among individuals and across communities, they can (when engaging reflection and action) be useful alongside other initiatives.

Municipal governments can

- ; Promote a balanced understanding of the role of alcohol in society
  - f* acknowledge the positive role of alcohol (engage people feel more relaxed, social, is a popular commodity and significant economic driver)
  - f* draw attention to the fact that alcohol can cause significant personal damage when used as self-medication (to cope with negative emotions or physical pain), or consumed in large amounts (causing falls, accidents and violence) or in excess over a period of time (causing chronic illness)
  - f* educate people about how alcohol can damage social relationships if used to alleviate public pressures, conform to exaggerated norms, escape difficulties, or used as an excuse for vandalism, violence and victimizing others (physical assault, psychological abuse, relational harm, economic deprivation)
  - f* spread the message that alcohol use can result in substantial added healthcare costs, law and order enforcement expense and employment performance-related losses
- ; Increase awareness of the moderate practices and attitudes of the majority
  - f* launch a social norms marketing campaign exposing facts that (1) most drinkers do not drink or approve of reckless drinking behaviours, and (2) most consumers not only avoid drinking and driving but also support rigorous enforcement measures
- ; Promote low-risk drinking guidelines and strategies
  - f* distribute materials recommending limits for any day and per week, listing situations where alcohol is the best option, and providing tips on how to avoid intoxication

Some questions to consider

- ? Do we have a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of using alcohol?
- ? Do we recognize that despite its benefits, alcohol is the drug that contributes to far more calculated costs than all illegal psychoactive substances combined? And are we aware that all alcohol-related costs stem from occasional excessive drinking by people who are mostly moderate drinkers?
- ? Do we realize that direct revenue from alcohol sales are lower than societal costs related to drinking, and that while moderate alcohol use may have some health benefits for middle-aged people, drinking contributes significantly to the development of serious chronic illness?
- ? Are we aware that alcohol impairment is a major cause of immediate injury?
- ? Are we using a variety of vehicles to convey our messages, and are we tailoring them to reach different target audiences?

Educational efforts should aim to impart a holistic message that respects abstinence (and encourages it among youth) and features both low-risk drinking advice for all drinkers and harm reduction strategies. Initiatives aiming to undermine typical overestimations of how many people actually drink excessively or support relaxed stances on alcohol policies should not be relied on alone to bring about cultural shift (Perkins et al., 2010).

### 3. Improve services

Health promotion that addresses the social ecological context will give greater breadth and depth to prevention initiatives. It will also reduce the burden on healthcare services, which in turn can be done in a stronger, more economic and more humane manner.

Municipal governments can

- ; Implement a workplace alcohol policy for civic officials and staff
  - f* set rules for alcohol consumption in the workplace or during working hours
  - f* spell out disciplinary response processes for situations where alcohol use has contributed to empl

# Steps to Success

## How is Our Community Doing?

- % We regularly assess and target different social-ecological factors in our municipality that give to inappropriate and unsafe use of alcohol
- % We promote those aspects of our community life that discourage unhealthy alcohol
- % We have developed a strategic plan to deal with concerns and exploit assets in a comprehensive fashion involving widespread community ownership and participation
- % We assess all communication to ensure a balanced message on alcohol that recognizes benefits, acknowledges harms and positively encourages individual collective responsibility for reducing damage
- % We seek to ensure that local services supply a continuum of stepped care ranging from brief intervention to extended assistance that incorporates stable housing and support for employment

### Resource links:

Helping Communities (CARBC). Available at [www.carbc.ca/HelpingCommunities.aspx](http://www.carbc.ca/HelpingCommunities.aspx)

Alcohol Publications (CARBC). Available at [www.carbc.ca/Home/Publications.aspx](http://www.carbc.ca/Home/Publications.aspx)

Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems. Available at [www.ensuringsolutions.org](http://www.ensuringsolutions.org)

Don't mix it! A guide for employers on alcohol at work. Available at [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.htm)

Alcohol and work: what everyone should know. Available at [www.alcoholandwork.adf.org.au](http://www.alcoholandwork.adf.org.au)

### Reference material:

Babor, T., Caetano, R., Casswell, S., Edwards, G., Giesler, N., Graham, K. et al. (2010). Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and public policy (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford.

Kendall, P.R.W. (2008). Public health approach to alcohol policy: Antipodean report from the Provincial Health Officer



The purchase price of alcohol for consumers relative to their overall income has shrunk considerably over time, while consumption and alcohol-associated costs for British Columbians (among other Canadians and constituencies around the globe) have gone up. Municipal governments can communicate their desire for the province to implement pricing policies aimed at reducing immoderate use, recognizing that periodic heavy drinking by people who usually drink moderately causes a sizable portion of alcohol-related harm (Kendall, 2008; Thomas et al., 2009; Segal & Stockwell, 2009; NASWG, 2007; Stockwell, Zhao & Thomas, 2009; Wagenaar et al., 2009; Elder et al., 2010; Babor et al., 2010).

In the fall of 2010, the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) unanimously endorsed a resolution calling for a

Actions taken in the other areas enumerated above would contribute to safer drinking environments (Kendall, 2008; Stockwell, 2010; Stockwell et al., 2009; Babor et al., 2010). Advocacy for such measures should demonstrate familiarity with the issues and specific advantages of proposals rather than just broad sentiment in their favour.

## 2. Appeal to federal government

Municipal governments can ask the federal government to

- ; Introduce random compulsory breath testing nationwide
- ; Carry out various strategies in the national alcohol strategy
  - f promote low-risk drinking guidelines
  - f introduce standard drink labelling on beverage containers
  - f provide adequate funding for extension of the alcohol and other drug monitoring initiative
  - f support community health prevention initiatives around alcohol concerns
  - f enhance public consciousness of alcohol's contribution to chronic disease
- ; Limit the amount and extent of alcohol advertising through more comprehensive legislation and enforcement

Some questions to consider

- ? What vehicles are there for multiple expressions of concern and appeal to the federal government? How effectively have we used these channels to communicate concerns and request action?
- ? What indications can we give the federal government to show both our commitment to current initiatives and our contribution to practical implementation?
- ? What leadership have we shown to address related issues under our own jurisdiction?

Random breath testing, when conducted in a visibly consistent fashion (as in Europe, New Zealand and especially Australia), is recognized internationally as one of the most effective strategies to reduce harms from impaired driving, a front on which Canada's progress has been somewhat stalled (Babor et al., 2010; Elder et al., 2002; Purssell et al., 2009; Solomon et al., 2009).

Actions in some of the other areas mentioned above are complementary to other efforts and can contribute to the cultivation of a climate of more careful consumption that would cut down considerably on casualties and costs (Kendall, 2008; NASWG, 2007; Babor et al., 2010).

# Steps to Success

## How is Our Community Doing?

- % We have identified alcohol-related issues in our community and understand the jurisdictional responsibilities of the various levels of government
- % We have addressed those concerns lying within our jurisdiction
- % We have demonstrated support for sound initiatives taken by other levels of government
- % We are committed to being a constructive critic and partner in the implementation of strong alcohol policies and have made positive proposals to other levels of government

### Resource links:

Union of BC Municipalities. Available at [www.ubcm.ca](http://www.ubcm.ca)

Alcohol Policy Network, Ontario Public Health Association. Available at [www.apolnet.ca](http://www.apolnet.ca)

MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) Canada. Available at [www.madd.ca](http://www.madd.ca)

### Reference material:

Babor, T., Caetano, R., Casswell, S., Edwards, G., Giesler, N., Graham, K. et al. (2010). Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and public policy (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford.

Elder, R.W., Lawrence, B., Ferguson, A., Naimi, T.S., Brewer, R.D., Chatterjee, A., et al. (2010). The effectiveness of tax policy interventions for reducing excessive alcohol consumption in foharms010).

Stockwell, T., Zhao, J. & Thomas, G. (2009). Should alcohol policies aim to reduce total alcohol consumption? New analyses of Canadian drinking patterns. *Addiction Research and Theory*, 135-151.

Thomas, G., Stockwell, & Reist, D. (2009). Alcohol pricing, public health and the HST: Proposed incentives for BC drinkers to make healthy choices. Centre for Addictions Research BC, University of Victoria.  
<http://carbc.ca/Portals/0/PropertyAgent/2111/Files/9/AlcPricingHST.pdf>

Wagenaar, A.C., Salois, M.J. & Ko, K.A. (2009). Effects of beverage alcohol price and tax levels on drinking: a meta-analysis of 1003 estimates from 112 studies. *Addiction*, 104(2), 179-190.

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