

NEWS RELEASE

November 25, 2014

It's Not How, It's How Many **New awareness campaign encourages young adults to think about their drinking**

Manitoba's new liquor and gaming regulator is launching its first public education campaign targeted at young adult Manitobans.

The Liquor and Gaming Authority of Manitoba (LGA) is offering an online quiz and an interactive tool to encourage Manitobans ages 18 to 24 who drink alcohol to consider how and when they consume it. The campaign will help them make responsible decisions by promoting Canada's national Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. Following these guidelines helps Canadians reduce the long-term health risks of drinking and the more immediate risks such as dangerous driving, intoxication, injury, violent behaviour and social embarrassment.

Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines were developed by a team of independent Canadian and international experts in partnership with the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. All provinces, including Manitoba, have endorsed the guidelines. Manitoba is the first province to promote the guidelines through a province-wide public education campaign.

"As Chair of the committee for a Manitoba Alcohol Strategy, I applaud the LGA initiative to raise public awareness about responsible alcohol use and ensure a common understanding of what constitutes sensible drinking," said Dr. Michael Routledge, Chief Provincial Public Health Officer.

"Reducing the negative health impacts of alcohol consumption is an important step in preventing injury and chronic disease for Manitobans," he added.

The LGA says the campaign encourages young adults to keep track of the number of drinks they consume on a single special occasion and weekly basis, and to understand how much alcohol is in a standard drink. In keeping with harm reduction strategies, part of the LGA's role is to educate Manitobans about the responsible consumption of alcohol and responsible gambling.

"This campaign will give young adults the tools they need to make their own responsible drinking choices," said Rick Josephson, the LGA's Chief Executive Officer. "We know from our provincial research that the majority of young adults understand the risks associated with drinking and driving, but they do not always think about the other risks of drinking alcohol."

"The province-wide campaign will target 18 to 24 year old Manitobans who choose to drink alcohol at a time of year when holiday parties and socializing are top of mind," he added.

The Know My Limits campaign features the statement, "it's not how, it's how many" and depicts young adults consuming alcohol in unusual or humorous ways.

The campaign website, www.KnowMyLimits.ca, explains Canada's weekly and special occasion guidelines, provides specific information about the risks of drinking alcohol, and features a quiz to help young adults profile their drinking behaviour and share it with friends in a factual yet provocative way. An interactive simulator gives them the chance to see how their pouring skills measure up.

Research shows that many young adults tend to drink alcohol at parties or while hanging out with friends at home, rather than in a bar or other licensed establishment where drink sizes are measured and regulated. The simulator will show them how much beer, wine or hard liquor they've poured, and whether it's above or below the standard unit size for the guidelines, so that they can be better aware of how many drinks they're actually pouring.

The website also includes tips to reduce the risks associated with drinking alcohol, like monitoring and setting limits, alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, and eating before and during drinking. All creative materials include a tagline that reminds Manitobans to "Always drink responsibly."

The campaign will run in English and French province-wide in radio, transit, public space, post-secondary newspapers, liquor retailers, and movie theatres for a six-week period from late November 2014 to early January 2015. Messages will also be prominent online through social media and high-traffic websites oriented to young adults.

For more information, visit www.KnowMyLimits.ca.

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BACKGROUND

YOUNG ADULTS AND LOW-RISK ALCOHOL DRINKING GUIDELINES

The *Liquor and Gaming Control Act* mandates the new Liquor and Gaming Authority of Manitoba (LGA) to educate Manitobans about responsible gambling and the responsible consumption of alcohol, in addition to its more traditional regulatory responsibilities. This carries forward the mandate of the former Manitoba Gaming Control Commission (MGCC), which ran a series of public education campaigns starting in 2005 to address common gambling myths and to encourage Manitobans to set and stick to limits when gambling.

The MGCC surveyed adult Manitobans about their drinking behaviour in 2013 in anticipation of the formation of the LGA. Results from this *Liquor and Gaming in Manitoba* survey pointed to the need for public education on low-risk drinking, and provided benchmarks to measure the success of the public education initiatives. Many Manitobans reported exceeding Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines and a small minority of Manitobans had heard of these guidelines. Young adults were selected as the target audience for this campaign because they were particularly likely to report exceeding the national guidelines. Other survey highlights include:

- 94% of young adults surveyed had no recollection of any low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines. Their impression of what responsible drinking involves is “know your limits” (34%), “having a designated driver” (23%) or “not getting drunk” (27%). The majority (84%) reported using at least one strategy to limit drinking or to drink responsibly.
- 94% of young adults surveyed are characterized as drinkers (having consumed alcohol within the previous 12 months). These results showed that most young people drink beer or mixed drinks (75% beer; 11% mixed drinks) rather than wine, coolers, shots or straight liquor.
- 86% of young adults surveyed reported that they had exceeded the national guideline for the maximum number of drinks to consume on any single special occasion.

Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines were developed by a team of independent experts in collaboration with the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and released in 2011 by the National Alcohol Strategy Advisory Committee. The guidelines are intended to help Canadians moderate their alcohol consumption and reduce the long-term health risks (e.g. cirrhosis, high blood pressure, stroke, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, some types of cancer) and the more immediate risks of consuming alcohol. Short-term risks include the risk of injuries from motor vehicle crashes, falls, and abusive or violent behaviour, and the risk of other harms such as alcohol poisoning, losing control, making bad decisions, overspending or embarrassing oneself. The guidelines are for *low-risk* drinking, not no-risk drinking, as the decision to consume any amount of alcohol always incurs some risk.

All provinces, including Manitoba, have endorsed the Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines and the National Alcohol Strategy Advisory Committee has formally encouraged provinces to promote these widely.