



“The 1999 survey results confirm the continuing upswing in drug use among Ontario youth that we have been seeing since 1993.”

—Edward Adlaf, lead author, *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey*, November 15, 1999

The Challenge of Underage Drinking

The numbers are in and they're not encouraging. According to the *1999 Ontario Student Drug Use Survey* released by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) on November 15, nearly three-quarters of students in grades 7 to 13 report drinking during their lifetime, two-thirds during the past year.

Particularly alarming is the rise in the number of students drinking heavily. About one in five reports drinking weekly, up from 14% in 1993. Just under half report consuming 5 or more drinks on at least one occasion during the past year, with 7% reporting 5 or more such occasions during the four weeks prior to the survey.

Hazardous or harmful drinking varied significantly by gender, grade, region of the province and even individual school. Males, students in grade 11, and those living in Northern Ontario are most at risk of alcohol problems. An analysis of risk and protective factors at the school and regional levels is currently being undertaken.

The news was not all bad, however. Fewer grade 7 students than in 1993, report first trying alcohol in grade 4 (13% versus 17%). Age of onset is considered to be a risk factor for alcohol problems later in life. The percentage of licensed young drivers reporting driving within an hour of consuming 2 or more drinks remained stable at 16%. This is significantly lower than the 58% who reported drinking and driving in 1977.

Still, the data suggest a need for a renewed focus on youth-oriented alcohol policies, in particular:

- Improved public education regarding the risks of alcohol use among young people, and the role of the minimum purchase/

Table 1: Alcohol Use & Related Problems Among Grade 7-13 Students in Ontario

	1999	1993
Estimated number of students in grades 7-13	923,000	925,000
Lifetime Drinkers	72.7%	65.5%
Past Year Drinkers: Ontario	65.7%	56.5%
• Toronto	59.4%	50.5%
• North	77.6%	67.5%
• West	70.5%	56.6%
• East	65.4%	57.6%
Drinkers consuming alcohol weekly	19.7%	14.4%
Drinkers consuming ≥ 5 drinks on at least one occasion	42.4%	30.5%
Drinkers reporting ≥ 5 heavy drinking occasions during past month	7.1%	4.2%
Students reporting ≥ 2 alcohol problems	6.0%	2.6%
Licensed students driving within 1 hour of consuming ≥ 2 drinks	15.6%	21.0%

Source: Ed Adlaf et al., *1999 Ontario Student Drug Use Survey*. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: Toronto, November 1999.

drinking age in reducing problems during the teenage years and beyond.

- More vigorous enforcement of laws governing underage and “third party” purchases of alcohol.
- Better research on the impact of recent developments in alcohol marketing on underage consumers and, more importantly, on cost-effective policy alternatives.
- More comprehensive school- and community-based prevention and early intervention programs.
- More appropriately targeted and better-funded social marketing campaigns to stem the shifting patterns and consequences of alcohol use, particularly the rising incidence of heavy drinking occasions among young people.

For details on OSDUS, visit the CAMH web site at www.camh.net/understanding/ont_study_drug_use.html. To purchase a copy of the 198 page survey, contact CAMH-Marketing, marketing@camh.net or call 800-661-1111. For more info on alcohol policy and youth, visit the Action Packs section of APOLNET www.apolnet.web.ca.

Research Corner

These articles were culled from recent issues of alcohol and health-related journals. For copies or to borrow a journal, contact the CAMH-ARF Library, 416-535-8501 Ext 6144, Email: isd@arf.org. To search for abstracts of these and other scholarly articles online, check out the *Research, Networking & Information Exchange Action Pack* on APOLNET, www.apolnet.web.ca.

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Round Up

MCCR Minister balances benefits and costs of extending liquor licensing hours

On November 27, Ontario Consumer and Commercial Relations Minister Bob Runciman announced that liquor service would be extended an hour to 4AM in licensed establishments and 3AM at licensed events in commemoration of Millennial Year 2000. The announcement was welcomed by enforcement and health and safety groups who feared the province would follow the lead of a number of other jurisdictions and allow bars and restaurants to remain open around the clock throughout the holidays. For a summary of the health and safety issues related to extended hours, go to www.apolnet.web.ca/barhours.pdf.

Provincial Health Minister announces \$5 million injury prevention funding

On December 13, Ontario Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer announced a 5 year, \$5 million partnership with SMARTRISK to help reduce unintentional injuries in the province. The funding came in response to *The Economic Burden of Unintentional Injury in Ontario*, a groundbreaking study that found that preventable injuries cost Ontario some \$2.9 billion in health and emergency services in 1996. The money will be used to: 1) develop a provincial injury prevention strategy incorporating a) research, b) information sharing, c) program support development, and d) education and social marketing; 2) promote increased and more coordinated research in the field of injury prevention; 3) develop prevention strategies for high-risk groups as well as the most common and costly causes of injury; and 4) use innovative education techniques and creative social marketing strategies to help Ontarians identify, manage, minimize or eliminate the risks in their everyday lives. For more info visit SMARTRISK web site, www.smartrisk.ca or call 416-463-9878.

Bill strengthens DUI sections of Criminal Code

On December 1, federal Justice Minister, Anne McLellan introduced legislation in the House of Commons to toughen the DUI sections of the *Criminal Code*. If passed, *Bill C-18* will raise maximum penalties for impaired driving causing death from 14 years to life in prison. It will also recognize suspicion of drug-impairment as a basis for

police to obtain a warrant for a blood sample. Currently, officers can only get a warrant if they believe that a driver committed an impaired driving offence involving alcohol, in circumstances involving an injury or a death, and where the driver is unable to consent to the taking of a blood sample. *Bill C-18* received second reading on December 3 and has been referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for consultation. To view the text of the bill go to www.parl.gc.ca/36/2/parlbus/chambus/house/bills/government/C-18/C-18_1/C18_cover-E.html. For updates on the status of the bill or to forward your comments, please contact Committee Clerk, Roger Préfontaine, 613-996-1553, just@parl.gc.ca. For the latest national impaired driving report released by StatsCan on November 17 call 800-387-2231 or go to www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/991117/d991117a.htm. For a copy of *Youth and Road Crashes - Reducing the Risks from Inexperience, Immaturity and Alcohol*, a comprehensive report on teen crash injuries and deaths and policy solutions released by MADD Canada and the Traffic Injury Research Foundation on November 30 go to www.madd.ca/library/youth/youth.htm or call TIRF at 613-238-5235.

Alcohol warning labels bill resurfaces

On October 25, Mississauga South MP Paul Szabo renewed his legislative efforts to make alcohol warning labels mandatory across Canada. If passed, *Bill C-260* would amend *the Food and Drugs Act* to require alcoholic beverages containing 1.5% alcohol by volume sold in Canada to bear a clearly printed and legible label warning the consumer that "alcoholic beverages impair the ability to operate vehicles and machinery, may affect the health of the consumer and may cause birth defects if consumed during pregnancy." Like all private members' bills, it is currently in a lottery to be considered for second reading. For more info contact Paul Szabo, 613-992-4848, Szabo.P@parl.gc.ca. Meanwhile, in the US, where warning labels are mandatory, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms announced that it would be holding public hearings in the new year to address the firestorm created by its decision to allow two types of counterbalancing health messages on alcohol containers. One directed consumers to their

family doctors for information regarding the "health effects of wine consumption." The second referred consumers to the Federal Government's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* which acknowledge the beneficial effects of low-levels of alcohol for certain people. For updates on the status of this debate, visit the Center for Science in Public Interest web site, www.cspinet.org/booze. On the Ontario front, a number of public health agencies are exploring the issue of mandatory standard drink labelling to support the dissemination of Ontario's *Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines*. Such labels, in effect in Australia and other jurisdictions, help consumers gauge the amount of alcohol in a serving. For more info on Australia's alcohol labelling laws go to the Australian Wine and Brandy Corp. web site, www.wineaustralia.com.au. For a discussion of the politics, see "Not much to ask for, really! The introduction of standard drink labelling in Australia" by David Hawks in the June 1999 issue of *Addiction*. For research on alcohol warning labels see www.adfq.org/oferrall.html or visit the Action Packs section of APOLNET.

Coalition urges funding for new Canadian health research institute on addictions

In October, a coalition of addictions agencies released a concept paper urging the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, a newly created federal health funding agency, to target \$8-10 million per year for research related to alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs and gambling. The authors noted that although addictions is a significant public health issue in Canada, accounting for some \$18 billion annually in health care, enforcement and other costs, funding for addictions is embarrassingly limited. In 1992-93, for example, the Canadian government invested \$0.12 per capita for research related to alcohol and other drugs, a fraction of the \$3.33 the US spent per capita that same year. And in 1998-99, the US government awarded *six times as much money to support addictions research conducted in Canada as did the Canadian government*. To view the paper visit the CCSA web site at www.ccsa.ca/CHRIA.htm. For more info on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, visit their web site at www.cihr.org.

News & Views

Dates to Remember

National Youth Against Impaired Driving Day, **Oct 5** • Drug Awareness Week, **Nov 14-20** • National Safe Driving Week, **Dec 1-7**. For details, consult the calendar of events in the *1999 Directory of Substance and Injury Prevention Contacts in Public Health* or visit the APN web site. Please email your updates/event dates for the 2000 edition to apn@web.ca.

Order Form for Date Rape Campaign Materials Now Online

Last spring, the Hamilton Rape Drug Awareness Committee unveiled a poster and bookmark to raise awareness of date rape drugs among 16-30 year old men and women. Bearing the message, *Rape drugs are out there ... Are they in here? Trust your instincts*, the focus-tested and professionally designed full colour posters have been distributed to downtown bars, secondary schools and colleges and universities in the region. For more info contact the Sexual Assault Centre 905-525-4573. To order customizable posters go to sano.arf.org/RapeDrugs/order.htm. For additional info contact the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 800-267-1291, www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence.

Low Risk Drinking Guidelines Campaign Report Released

The LRDG Committee released a report on the campaign to promote Ontario's *Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines* at the OPHA Annual Conference. To view go to the LRDG Action Pack on APOLNET. The committee was also successful in raising an additional \$8,000 to 1) develop a plain language version of the LRDG brochure, including artwork; 2) produce a series of radio public service announcements targeting various aspects of the Guidelines; 3) compile a bibliography and list of provincial, national and international resources designed to support the moderate drinking campaigns and 4) a how-to guide to assist public health units and others in planning local LRDG campaigns. Materials will be posted on APOLNET and distributed to key groups in Fall 2000. For more info, contact Paula Neves or Marianne Kobus-Matthews, marianne_kobusmatthe@camh.net.

Teen Web site unveiled

During Drug Awareness Week, the Peterborough County-City Health Unit, and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health unveiled an interactive new website designed to provide youth with information about alcohol, healthy choices and harm reduction. To view *The Virtual Party* go to www.virtual-party.org/english/index.htm. Also worth a look: *Books and Booze*, an interactive software program developed by the University of Alberta to inform students about alcohol and issues such as alcohol poisoning, first aid for overconsumption, the legal aspects of drinking and driving and tips for smart partying. Free Mac and Windows versions available at www.ualberta.ca/dept/health/public_html/healthinfo/books.html.

APN News

The Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition (TCPC) has invited APN to bring together a small group of researchers and health promoters active in the substance abuse field. Our task: to examine the links between alcohol and cancer and present recommendations for action at a planning and action forum set to take place in **March 2000**. TCPC is comprised of 125 members, including 45 organizations active in cancer prevention across the Central East Region. It was founded in 1998 with financial and administrative assistance from the Toronto Public Health Department, Cancer Care Ontario and the Ministry of Health, among others. For more info contact Coalition Coordinator, Safoura Moazami, smoazami@city.toronto.on.ca, 416-392-7469. For info on the Alcohol and Cancer Work Group contact Chair, Dr. Norman Giesbrecht, norman_giesbrecht@camh.net or Paula Neves, apn@web.ca.

About Us

Alcohol Policy Update (APU) is a free quarterly fax-newsletter of the Alcohol Policy Network (APN), a project of the Ontario Public Health Association. Our mission is to facilitate the development of policies that prevent problems associated with alcohol use and enhance the health, safety and well-being of individuals and communities across Ontario.

APN fulfills its mission by offering a range of products and services including information and referral, regional workshops and seminars, publications and a comprehensive website called APOLNET.

APN does not take public positions on issues although its members and the Ontario Public Health Association may do so.

Information appearing in this newsletter in no way constitutes an endorsement by OPHA or its members. Submissions are welcome. Printing is subject to space availability.

APU is distributed via fax to over 600 subscribers active in substance abuse prevention, injury prevention and public health. It is also available on APOLNET, the APN web site at www.apolnet.web.ca.

For more info on this newsletter or APN's other products and services, please contact Paula Neves, Project Manager apn@web.ca or 800-267-6817 Ext 27.

Alcohol Policy Network

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I will use this information to ...

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Good

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1

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