

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: BC COALITION FOR ACTION ON ALCOHOL REFORM

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write a letter to the Provincial Ministers of Health, the Solicitor General, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Housing and Social Development supporting the City of Victoria resolution to reduce alcohol related harms in the Province.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to Lembi Buchanan, Chair, BC Coalition for Action on Alcohol Reform, 1701 Cedar Hill Cross Road, Suite 609, Victoria, BC V8P 2P9.

REPORT

The Social Issues Committee, at its meeting held on 2010 October 07, received correspondence from Lembi Buchanan, Chair, BC Coalition for Action on Alcohol Reform seeking support of the *attached* City of Victoria resolution. Arising from discussion, the Committee recommended that Council support the resolution urging the Provincial Government to address the significant public safety and health issues associated with alcohol abuse.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor P. Calendino
Chair

Councillor P. McDonell
Vice Chair

Councillor A. Kang
Member

Victoria, British Columbia February 4, 2010

Motion to have mayor and council write a letter of support re: alcohol reduction strategy to the Provincial Government.

1. Whereas:

- Residents of BC consume more than 1.4 billion standard drinks per year.
- The annual cost of alcohol abuse in BC is \$2.2 billion or \$536 per person, the highest per capita cost in Canada.
- The government relies on its most vulnerable and high-risk drinkers to pay its bills. Twenty per cent of the drinking population consumes 73 per cent of the beer, wine and spirits sold in the province. Most of them would qualify for treatment.
- Alcohol abuse is often associated with domestic abuse, crime and violence, including homicide and suicide.
- Thirty per cent of all criminal activity is attributed to alcohol.
- Every year, one in four of fatal motor vehicle accidents are alcohol-related.
- Long-term alcohol abuse puts you at risk for developing a number of cancers, including breast cancer, as well as liver and heart disease.
- More than 50 per cent of people diagnosed with mental illness abuse alcohol and/or drugs.
- Alcohol abuse often exacerbates symptoms or mental illness or triggers new symptoms.
- Prenatal abuse of alcohol is the leading cause of birth defects including fetal alcohol syndrome.
- Close to 30 per cent of males and 14 per cent of females report regularly drinking above low-risk guidelines.
- Risky alcohol use is fairly common among under-age youth, with 25 per cent reporting binge drinking at least once a month.
- Alcohol abuse is the leading cause of homelessness for persons with serious mental illness.
- The average, annual cost of homelessness is \$55,000 per person.

Let it be passed that in response to a request for a letter of support from the *BC Coalition for Action on Alcohol Reform* mayor and council send a letter to the Provincial Ministers of Health, the Solicitor General, Dr. Perry Kendall and VIHA supporting the following recommendations made by the Centre for Addictions Research of B.C. and Dr. Perry Kendall to reduce the public safety and health concerns associated with problematic alcohol use in our society:

1. Reduce the price of low alcohol content beverages and increase the price of high alcohol content beverages.
2. Set a minimum price per standard drink, \$1.50 in the liquor store and \$3.00 in a bar or restaurant. The minimum price for a bottle of wine would be \$ 7.80; \$9.00 for a six-pack of beer and \$26 for a bottle of spirits.
3. Tax wine and beer products sold at u-vin and u-brew outlets.
4. Index the price of alcohol to inflation.
5. Implement a small levy based on standard drinks and use the proceeds to enhance prevention, treatment and research.