

# PROMISING POLICIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL-RELATED HARMS

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With the contribution of :

Québec ■■■

 **AS PQ**  
ASSOCIATION POUR LA SANTÉ  
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Our organization advises, investigates, raises awareness, mobilizes stakeholders and issues recommendations based on evidence, expert consensus, international experience and social acceptability.



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# Introduction

In Quebec, the harms and consequences of alcohol consumption remain largely misunderstood and ignored by the population. Approximately 200 social and health problems are associated with alcohol consumption and any “regular” consumption, even in small amounts, can have harmful effects.<sup>1,2</sup> It can also aggravate other psychosocial problems (domestic violence, crimes, pathological gambling, etc.).<sup>3,4</sup> Public policies are considered essential tools to reduce alcohol-related harms, as they can be used to influence both the levels and contexts of alcohol consumption, as well as the social acceptability and standards related to alcohol.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup>

Many exemplary policies and preventive measures are already in effect in Quebec. For example, the province has a zero-tolerance policy for driving under the influence of alcohol among young drivers. The marketing of alcohol is regulated in parts by both the federal government and the province of Quebec. An overview of the various laws and government policies addressing alcohol consumption is provided as an annex to this document.

However, despite all the laws and regulations, it is clear to the policies in place are no longer sufficient.<sup>9,10</sup> In Quebec alone, the social and health impacts of alcohol cost an estimated \$3 billion a year.<sup>11</sup> We need to create conditions that promote reduced alcohol consumption and safer drinking through effective public policies and targeted awareness-raising and informative actions.

In order to inform such decisions, this document provides an overview of promising initiatives selected according to the following criteria:

- Being related to the issues and measures most often addressed by the organizations consulted during the production of our report *L'alcool au Québec : opinions de la population et des organismes sur la norme sociale et les politiques publiques*;
- Being scientifically researched and evaluated, with their impact well documented; and
- Having been successfully implemented in other Canadian provinces or other countries with similar political and social contexts.

Consequently, this document will take a closer look at the following policies:

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# 1

## Establishing a minimum price on alcohol

### Pricing of alcoholic beverages

- The price of alcoholic beverages has a direct influence on purchasing behaviour and is a major determinant of excessive consumption<sup>12</sup>, particularly among at-risk and vulnerable consumers<sup>13</sup> such as young people.<sup>14</sup>
- Many studies confirm that increasing the price of alcohol is one of the most successful approaches to reducing alcohol consumption and associated social harms<sup>15, 16, 17</sup>
- It is estimated that setting a minimum price per standard drink of alcohol in Quebec would reduce average alcohol consumption, as well as alcohol-related deaths and hospitalizations:
  - ◊ Setting this price at \$1.75 per standard drink of alcohol would reduce alcohol consumption by about 8.6%, resulting in 11.5% fewer deaths (about 327) and 16.3% fewer hospitalizations (about 4,000).<sup>18, 19</sup>

### Current policies in Quebec

- In Quebec, unlike other Canadian provinces, only beer products sold by grocery permit holders (e.g., convenience stores and supermarkets) are subject to a minimum sale price.

- Minimum beer prices are indexed annually and vary based on alcohol levels. For example, according to April 2021 guidelines, a case of 12 bottles or cans of 5% beer must sell for at least \$14.01.<sup>20, 21</sup>
- Provincial law imposes a specific tax on the purchase of alcoholic beverages, in addition to GST and QST, at a rate of \$0.63 per litre for beer and \$1.40 per litre for other alcoholic beverages.<sup>22</sup>
- The pricing of products sold in *Société des alcools du Québec* (SAQ) stores is negotiated and subject to commercial agreements, in addition to excise, customs duties, and federal and provincial sales taxes.<sup>23</sup>

### Popular support

- A quarter of Quebecers say they are in favour of the government imposing a minimum price for the sale of all types of alcohol. Slightly more than a quarter of the population has no opinion on the question, while almost half say they are not in favour of the introduction of minimum prices.<sup>24</sup>

In Quebec, only beer products sold by grocery permit holders (e.g., convenience stores and supermarkets) are subject to a minimum sale price.



## Examples of measures

- For public health reasons, Scotland introduced a minimum (or unit) price per drink of alcohol in 2018<sup>25</sup>, followed by Wales in 2020<sup>26</sup> and Ireland in 2022<sup>27</sup>.
- Several Canadian provinces have adopted minimum pricing policies for alcohol sold for take-out or consumption on premises, reporting positive results.<sup>28, 29, 30, 31</sup> Along with Alberta, Quebec is one of only two provinces without a general minimum price on alcohol.

**Table summarizing minimum prices (\$) implemented in other Canadian provinces as of 2017 (these prices may differ from current minimum prices), along with categories without minimum prices (-), by type of alcohol**

Provinces and territories	Take-out				On-premises			
	Beer	Wine	Coolers	Spirits	Beer	Wine	Coolers	Spirits
BC	1.35	1.03	1.12	1.37	3.22	3.45	2.47	5.18
AB	-	-	-	-	2.39	1.76	1.98	4.32
SK	1.52	1.45	1.28	1.38	2.09	1.68	1.61	3.38
MB	1.37	1.22	1.27	1.27	2.25	2.16	1.61	3.38
ON	1.33	1.17	1.19	1.49	2.00	1.92	1.43	2.94
QC	1.36	-	0.93	-	-	-	-	-
NB	1.27	1.23	1.65	1.05	1.35	1.73	3.10	2.16
PE	2.17	2.05	1.94	1.51	2.50	3.45	2.45	3.45
NS	1.82	1.82	1.78	1.48	2.40	2.40	1.72	3.67
NL	1.83	1.72	2.12	1.47	1.65	1.91	1.13	2.34

\* Data taken from CAPE reports by province and territory produced by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research at the University of Victoria, <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/projects/active/projects/canadian-alcohol-policy-evaluation.php>

Alcoholic beverages represent 14% of annual household expenditures.



## Economic impacts

- Alcoholic beverages represent 14% of annual household expenditures.<sup>32</sup> While generally less popular, increasing the cost of alcohol to reduce its accessibility is the most beneficial measure in terms of cost-benefit.<sup>33</sup>
- While the price of alcohol falls under provincial jurisdiction, setting a minimum price affects Canadian international trade agreements to which Quebec is a party. However, legitimate and important public health concerns may be used to justify derogations from competition policies.<sup>34, 35, 36</sup>
- Even taking into account a decline in consumption, increasing the price of alcohol would bolster state revenues by reducing the health and social costs of alcohol-related harm, in addition to the revenues drawn directly from sales.<sup>37, 38</sup>
- Setting a minimum price on alcohol has a disproportionate economic impact on less affluent and more vulnerable groups, but studies confirm that these groups are also the ones who benefit most from this measure.<sup>39, 40</sup>

## Strategies to consider

- Establish a minimum price per standard drink of alcohol on all sales of alcoholic beverages.

# 2

## Restricting sales and promotions on the price of alcohol

### Promotional pricing

- Promotions related to the price of alcoholic beverages are intended to reduce the price of a product for a short period. They come in different forms: products or samples offered with the purchase of alcoholic beverages, sales, contests, coupons, payment of taxes, reductions on multiple purchases, etc.
- The price of alcoholic beverages<sup>i</sup> has a direct influence on purchasing behaviours, particularly among groups considered at-risk or vulnerable.<sup>41, 42</sup>
- Promotional pricing directly affects the price of alcohol by lowering it or giving the impression of a bargain. It is an influential business strategy that can be used to target specific consumer groups.<sup>43, 44, 45</sup> Policies aimed at restricting promotional pricing have been found to be effective in reducing alcohol-related harms.<sup>46</sup>
- Exposure to brand advertising through the distribution of promotional items encourages alcohol consumption among teenagers and young adults.<sup>47, 48, 49</sup>

### The situation in Quebec

- According to a survey conducted by Léger in 2022 for the ASPQ, more than 6 out of 10 Quebecers aged 15 and over said that promotions offering discounts on alcohol encourage them to consume more. This proportion is higher among full-time students and younger age groups (17-34 years old).
- The ASPQ conducted a review of marketing practices<sup>50</sup> which shed light on the many forms of promotional pricing and advertising on alcoholic products and led to the following observations:
  - ◊ Promotional pricing is not exclusive to grocery permit holders: this practice is just as common in government-owned SAQ branches and in establishments for on-site alcohol consumption such as bars, restaurants and clubs.
  - ◊ Promotions are advertised through various traditional or digital channels and media.
  - ◊ **Cross-promotions**, which involve offering a free product with the purchase of identified alcoholic products, are among the most common pricing promotions. The products offered are diverse: promotional items, loyalty points, discount coupons, gift cards, food items (often of low nutritional quality) such as potato chips, juices, non-alcoholic beverages, and even other alcoholic products.
  - ◊ Discounts on multiple purchases and visual displays to advertise low prices are among the strategies most frequently used by grocery permit holders.
  - ◊ Despite laws prohibiting such practices, establishments continue to advertise "Ladies' night" or "Happy Hour"-type events.

More than 6 out of 10 Quebecers aged 15 and over said that promotions offering discounts on alcohol encourage them to consume more.



<sup>i</sup> For further information, refer to the ASPQ's information sheet on minimum pricing policies above in this document: "Establishing a minimum price on alcohol "

## Current policies in Quebec

Quebec's *Regulation respecting promotion, advertising and educational programs relating to alcoholic beverages* (CQLR, c. P.-9) prohibits on-site consumption permit holders (e.g. bars, hotels and restaurants) from:

- ◊ Offering discounts on the regular price of drinks;
- ◊ Advertising free alcoholic beverages.
- The *Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux du Québec*, the government body responsible for overseeing the application of the law by liquor license holders, specifies that to "to qualify as a regular price, alcoholic beverages must be sold at the same price every day or for one or more days of the week, for several weeks". They must be able to be entered in the price list.<sup>51</sup>
- Promotional events like "2 for 1", "Happy Hour" or "5 à 7" are tolerated, but they cannot be advertised.
- Holders of liquor licenses for consumption on premises are not allowed to discount their alcohol products during a special event such as Christmas, Halloween, Back-to-School or the Super Bowl.



- These restrictions do not apply to takeout permit holders (e.g. grocery stores, convenience stores), who must comply with the general obligation "not to advertise alcoholic beverages in a manner that could induce a person to consume alcoholic beverages in an irresponsible manner".<sup>52</sup>

## Popular support

- In 2016, just over 4 out of 10 Quebecers said they were in favour of banning promotional pricing on alcoholic beverages.<sup>53</sup>

## Examples of measures

- The Northwest Territories prohibits the distribution of discount coupons for the purchase of alcohol.<sup>54</sup>
- Ontario prohibits promotional pricing based on the purchase of other beverages (multiple-purchase discounts, 2 for 1 sales, etc.).<sup>55</sup>
- In 2021, Ireland banned the promotional pricing of alcohol, including loyalty programs and discounts.<sup>56</sup>

## Strategies to consider

- Prohibit the offer of promotional products with the purchase of alcoholic products (cross-promotions);
- Prohibit discounts on multiple purchases (Happy Hour, 2-for-1 sale, payment of taxes, etc.);
- Prohibit the application of loyalty programs and coupons on alcohol products;
- Prohibit the advertising of promotional pricing on alcohol products.

# 3

## Reducing the legal limit for blood-alcohol concentration when driving

*Pre-pandemic data was favoured in cases where current health measures could influence the results.*

### Alcohol and driving: a few facts

- Several studies have proven the disruptive effects of the presence of alcohol in the blood on one's ability to drive a car, including in concentrations as low as 20 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood (0.02). Among other things, alcohol impairs judgment and cognitive and motor skills.<sup>57, 58</sup>
- A blood-alcohol level higher than 0.05 increases the risk of being involved in a fatal accident by 4 to 6 times.<sup>59, 60</sup>
- Canadian provinces that have lowered the BAC limit below 0.08 and implemented new programs providing immediate sanctioning and quick processing of impaired driving cases have seen decreased numbers of accidents involving alcohol (see the ASPQ's case study of British Columbia).<sup>61, 62</sup>
- Several studies support the benefits of lowering the BAC limit.<sup>63, 64</sup>
- Measures aimed at preventing drinking and driving must be part of a global public health approach to alcohol consumption. In addition, impaired driving laws must be enforced and publicized to be effective.<sup>65</sup>

### The situation in Quebec

- In 2019, according to numbers reported by the Sûreté du Québec, more than 10% of fatal collisions were caused by impaired driving due to alcohol, drugs or fatigue.<sup>66</sup>
- In 2019, nearly a third of the 139 Quebec drivers who died as a result of an automobile accident and who underwent a blood alcohol test had a result greater than 80 mg per 100 ml of blood (0.08).<sup>67</sup>
- Impaired driving is among the main causes of accidents in Quebec. Drunk driving is estimated to cause an average of 85 deaths and 220 serious injuries every year. Approximately 12,500 criminal offences are related to driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.<sup>68</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 10 (8%) Quebecers surveyed claimed to have driven after consuming alcohol over the legal limit.<sup>69</sup>
- In 2022, nearly 30% of Quebecers believe that it is possible to drive safely with a blood alcohol level below 0.08. Men and those who consume alcohol more than once a week are more likely to say so.<sup>70</sup>
- Impaired driving remains one of the leading causes of criminal death in Canada, being linked 155 deaths and 540 injuries in 2019.<sup>71</sup> The WHO estimates that at least 30% of road deaths in Canada are linked to alcohol consumption.<sup>72</sup>
- In Quebec, the *Table québécoise de la sécurité routière* has held consultations and made several recommendations, notably on impaired driving. However, its mandate was suspended in 2017.<sup>73</sup>

### Economic impacts

- Total compensations paid and social costs due to alcohol-related accidents in Quebec are estimated to be at least \$400 million per year.<sup>74</sup>
- In Canada, the most recent figures published in 2013 estimate the annual costs due to deaths, injuries and collisions related to impaired driving at \$20.5 billion.<sup>75</sup>
- Studies show that implementing and communicating policies aimed at reducing alcohol-impaired driving, including lowering the blood alcohol limit, strengthening the sanctioning process, and increasing road checks, are generally efficient and cost-effective measures.<sup>76, 77</sup>

## Popular perceptions and support

- In 2022, just over half (51%) of Quebecers aged 15 and over surveyed believed that the blood alcohol limit for driving should be reduced to 0.05. This proportion is higher among teenagers aged 16-17.<sup>78</sup>
- In 2020, 70% of Quebecers surveyed agreed that the penalties for drinking and driving should be more severe.<sup>79</sup>
- In 2017, more than half of those surveyed (53%) stated that they are not at all likely or somewhat unlikely to be intercepted by a police DUI roadblock. Less than a third (29%) claimed to have seen such a police checkpoint over the past year.<sup>80</sup>

## Current policies

According to the WHO, at least 89 countries enforce a maximum blood alcohol limit of 0.05 or less for the general population and at least 48 countries have a maximum blood alcohol limit of 0.02 or less for young drivers.<sup>81</sup> In Canada and Quebec, the rules currently in force can be summarized as follows:

→ Under the *Criminal Code* (Canada)<sup>82</sup>:

- ◊ A person can be arrested and convicted of impaired driving if their blood alcohol equals or exceeds 80 g of alcohol per 100 ml of blood (0.08);
- ◊ If they are found guilty (criminal record), offenders are liable to penalties ranging from a fine to imprisonment.

→ Under the *Highway Safety Code* (Quebec)<sup>83, 84</sup>:

- Blood alcohol limit of 0.08 for people aged 22 and over, holding regular driver's licence and driving a road vehicle;
- 0.05 blood alcohol limit for drivers of heavy vehicles;
- Zero tolerance policy for:
  - ◊ Holders of a learner's licence or a probationary licence;
  - ◊ Holders of a driving licence aged 21 and under;
  - ◊ Drivers of a bus, a minibus, a taxi or a car used as a taxi when they are on duty.
- Individuals who violate any of these rules are liable to administrative and penal sanctions issued by the province (in addition to possible federal criminal charges and penalties if their blood alcohol level is over 0.08): seizure of their vehicle, suspension or revocation of their driver's license, fines and fees.
- Repeat offenders (previous offence within the last 10 years) and those who exceed a blood alcohol level of 0.16 or refuse to submit to a police check are liable to more severe administrative sanctions.

- All Canadian provinces, apart from Quebec, impose administrative penalties for blood alcohol levels below the Canadian standard of 0.08:

Province or Territory	Provincial or territorial BAC limit
British Columbia <sup>85</sup>	< 0,05
Alberta <sup>86</sup>	< 0,05
Saskatchewan <sup>87</sup>	<b>&lt; 0,04</b>
Manitoba <sup>88</sup>	< 0,05
Ontario <sup>89</sup>	< 0,05
Quebec	<b>&lt; 0,08</b>
New Brunswick <sup>90</sup>	< 0,05
Nova Scotia <sup>91</sup>	< 0,05
Prince Edward Island <sup>92</sup>	< 0,05
Newfoundland and Labrador <sup>93</sup>	< 0,05
Yukon <sup>94</sup>	<b>&lt; 0,08</b>
Nunavut <sup>95</sup>	< 0,05
Northwest Territories <sup>96</sup>	< 0,05

## Strategies to consider

- ▶ Lower the provincial blood alcohol limit to 0.05 for road vehicle drivers aged 22 and over and not subject to a learner's or probationary licence (amendment to the *Highway Safety Code*), along with immediate administrative penalties.
- ▶ Increase police presence and control (number of roadblocks and Selective Law Enforcement (SEP) programs);
- ▶ Complement new administrative measures and sanctions with awareness campaigns.

# 4

## Restrict alcohol-related sponsorships

### Alcohol-related sponsorships

- Alcohol sponsorships can take several forms: product placement in television programs, movies or video games, financial contributions to certain events or activities, and offers of alcohol products for events or activities, usually in exchange for mentioning the sponsor's contribution or displaying their logo or company name.
- Sponsorships are an increasingly common promotional practice used by the alcoholic beverage industry. Some studies suggest that the strategic placement of alcoholic products, particularly in films, has doubled over the past two decades.<sup>97</sup>
- Several studies confirm that exposure to alcohol marketing (including sponsorships) and promotional items have an influence on the perceptions, habits, and levels of alcohol consumption, particularly among more vulnerable groups like young people.<sup>98, 99, 100, 101, 102</sup> Several studies also highlight the increasing presence and influence of sponsorships in sports.<sup>103, 104, 105</sup>
- In addition to reducing the prevalence of tobacco brands in movies, the limitation of product placement by tobacco companies in the United States is also associated with fewer scenes involving tobacco use in general, thereby reducing public exposure.<sup>106</sup>

### The situation in Quebec

- Sponsorship by the alcohol industry is widespread:
  - ◊ Every team in the QMJHL, a league featuring players who are minors, is sponsored by an alcohol manufacturer, as are several professional teams.
  - ◊ Several sporting events such as the *Red Bull Ice Cross*, festivals, concerts, foundations, and benefit events are also sponsored by players in the alcohol industry (including the SAQ). Quebec television shows also include alcoholic products placements.<sup>107, 108</sup>

### Current policies

- Provincial legislation does not specifically regulate advertising through sponsorships or placement of alcoholic products, and it does not prohibit the sponsorship of events or groups by the alcohol industry. Such sponsorships are allowed.
- In its current form, Quebec's *Regulation respecting advertising, promotion and educational programs relating to alcoholic beverages*, prohibits manufacturers and permit holders (retailers, bars, restaurants, etc.) from advertising on clothing and equipment intended for minors.<sup>109</sup>
- Any advertising for alcoholic beverages made by a manufacturer appearing in Quebec must be pre-authorized by the *Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux* (RAC).<sup>110</sup>
- Radio and television advertisements must comply with the CRTC's *Code for Broadcast Advertising of Alcoholic Beverages*.<sup>111</sup>
- Some companies, as well as the SAQ<sup>112</sup>, have donation and sponsorship policies that often include few guidelines. The SAQ specifies, for example, that donations and sponsorships must be aimed at clients of legal age and may not be associated with a religious or political cause.
- Some schools also have internal sponsorship policies.<sup>113</sup>
- A majority of Canadian students agree that universities should limit alcohol-related advertising, marketing, and sponsorship on campuses.<sup>114</sup>

## Perceptions and popular support

- In 2022, 65% of Quebecers aged 15 and over said they would agree to a ban on alcohol advertising in the form of sponsorships for groups or events frequented by minors.<sup>115</sup>
- In 2022, 42% of Quebecers aged 15 and over said they agree with the fact that there are too many references to alcohol in television and radio programs (excluding advertisements).<sup>116</sup>
- A significant proportion (32%) of respondents to a 2016 SOM survey commissioned by the ASPQ said that alcohol consumption in television shows disturbs them, particularly among those who do not drink or are trying to stay abstinent.<sup>117</sup>

## Examples of measures

To counter the influence of brand marketing and the association with certain lifestyles and activities on alcohol consumption, different jurisdictions have moved to regulate alcohol-related sponsorships:

- In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission requires a declaration of product placement to be included at the end of broadcasts.<sup>118</sup>
- In Finland, sponsorships involving strong alcoholic beverages (more than 22% alcohol by volume) are prohibited and certain restrictions apply to so-called medium alcoholic beverages (containing no more than 22% alcohol by volume).<sup>119, 120</sup>
- In France, all types of alcohol-related sponsorships, including product placement, are prohibited.<sup>121, 122</sup>
- In Canada, the Northwest Territories has adopted restrictions on alcohol-related sponsorships, notably for events where minors are involved, if the value of the sponsorship is more than \$1,500, and when awarding prizes.<sup>123</sup>
- The City of Toronto's Alcohol Policy requires that manufacturer-sponsored events include responsible drinking messages.<sup>124</sup>
- Quebec laws governing cannabis and tobacco use prohibit all sponsorships associated with cannabis and tobacco. They do not, however, prohibit donations made without a promotional agreement.<sup>125, 126</sup>

## Strategies to consider

- Several legislative avenues could be considered at the provincial level to restrict alcohol-level sponsorships, or certain aspects of such sponsorships, notably by broadening the definition of advertising to include sponsorships and product placement, and by taking inspiration from Quebec's own regulations on cannabis and tobacco and measure taken in other jurisdictions.

In 2022, 42% of Quebecers aged 15 and over said they agree with the fact that there are too many references to alcohol in television and radio program.



# 5

## Prohibiting alcoholic product advertising displays in public spaces

### Alcohol advertising: a few facts

- Some studies suggest that minors are more exposed to advertisements than young adults and that alcohol advertisements are sometimes designed specifically to appeal to them.<sup>127</sup>
- Several studies confirm that exposure to alcohol marketing (including sponsorships) and promotional items have an influence the perceptions, habits, and levels of alcohol consumption, particularly among more vulnerable groups like young people.<sup>128, 129, 130, 131, 132</sup>
- All forms of advertising and the media where advertising is found (magazines, displays in stores or events, and television) influence the perception of alcohol and the risk of initiation among children and teenagers.<sup>133</sup>
- Exposure to alcohol advertising near schools is linked to a stronger desire among children and teenagers to consume alcohol in their lifetime, encouraging alcohol initiation.<sup>134</sup>
- It is estimated that every 10 % increase in corporate spending on advertising increases alcohol consumption by up to 3 % among the adult population. This proportion could be higher among minors.<sup>135</sup>

### The situation in Quebec

- Alcohol advertising is omnipresent in Quebec's public space, and everyone is exposed to it, including vulnerable populations (e.g., young people, pregnant women, people dealing with addiction). As shown in a recent ASPQ report on alcohol marketing, alcohol advertising is everywhere in our lives: from our cell phones to our highways.<sup>136</sup>
- Quebecers mistakenly think that alcohol advertising does not influence their consumption despite studies showing the opposite: in a June 2021 Léger survey conducted on behalf of the ASPQ, 80 % of respondents said that alcohol advertising does not influence their drinking habits. That said, among those who said they were influenced, young people aged 18-34 were the most likely to say so, followed by parents of minor children.<sup>137</sup>

### Current policies in Quebec

- There are no specific restrictions on the display or advertising of alcohol in outdoor public places.
- Quebec's *Regulation respecting advertising, promotion and educational programs relating to alcoholic beverages*<sup>138</sup> regulates the distribution and content of advertising and promotional messages. Notably, it prohibits liquor license holders (e.g., bars, restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, and manufacturers):
  - ◊ From making advertisements aimed at minors, encouraging minors to consume alcohol or employing a minor as part of the advertisement;
  - ◊ From presenting alcohol consumption as a symbol of value or success, a solution, a necessity or a way to increase sports performance ("lifestyle" advertising);
  - ◊ From associating alcohol consumption with driving a vehicle;
  - ◊ From encouraging irresponsible drinking<sup>139</sup>;
  - ◊ From announcing, via an advertisement, the free consumption of alcoholic beverages;
  - ◊ From making advertisements encouraging irresponsible drinking, such as promoting an open bar, a "ladies' night" or low-priced drinks.
- Under the terms of the law, the SAQ is not considered a license holder and is therefore not subject to these regulations.<sup>140, 141</sup>
- In December 2020, the *Regulation respecting alcoholic beverage advertising, promotion and educational programs* was amended to allow licensees to advertise alcoholic beverage brands from a single manufacturer (instead of several), both inside and outside their establishments.<sup>142</sup>

- The *Roadside Advertising Act*<sup>143</sup> and the *Roadside Advertising Regulation*<sup>144</sup> also regulate the presence of advertisements, commercial or not, along the roads maintained by the Ministry of Transportation (provincial roads) and around rest areas and lookouts, notably by specifying certain construction standards.
- In Canada, the broadcasting of advertisements on radio and TV is also governed by the CRTC (federal).<sup>145</sup>

## Example of measures

- In Saskatchewan, point-of-sale advertising is limited in quantity, zoning restrictions prohibit advertisements near elementary or secondary schools and places of worship (200 m), and advertising is prohibited on or inside buses transporting minors, on Web pages or other media intended primarily for minors, and on television and radio during hours when minors are likely to constitute the main audience.<sup>146</sup>
- Prince Edward Island does not allow alcohol advertising on billboards and illuminated displays in public spaces, with the exception of the Prince Edward Island Liquor Control Commission.<sup>147</sup>
- In the Yukon, alcohol advertising and promotion must comply with the CRTC's *Code for broadcast advertising of alcoholic beverages*. The regulations specify that this includes advertisements in print form, as well as advertisements distributed in digital, social and print media, radio, television, social media and internet, curbside signs and billboards.<sup>148</sup>



53% of respondents aged 15 and over agreed that billboards along highways should not advertise alcoholic beverages.

- In France, the *Loi Évin* strictly restricts marketing in the public space. Advertisements can be displayed outdoors only for the purpose of providing product information - "lifestyle" advertisements and advertisements in publications targeting minors are prohibited.<sup>149</sup>

## Economic impacts

- Banning alcohol advertising is one of the most cost-effective policies.<sup>150</sup>
- Restrictions on alcohol advertising targeting minors can have a positive impact on the number of road accidents involving young people.<sup>151</sup>

## Popular support

- A trend in favour of stricter regulations on alcohol advertising is emerging among Quebecers: in 2020, 46% said they supported a ban on advertising of alcoholic products, while 30% disagreed.<sup>152</sup>
- According to a June 2021 **Léger poll** conducted on behalf of the ASPQ, more than half of respondents (61%) said they supported a ban on the distribution and display of alcohol advertisements in public spaces likely to be frequented by minors (e.g., public transportation, streets, storefronts, and terraces).
- According to a Léger survey commissioned by the ASPQ in March 2022, in Quebec<sup>153</sup>:
  - ◊ 53% of respondents aged 15 and over agreed that billboards along highways should not advertise alcoholic beverages;
  - ◊ 46% of people aged 15 and over agreed that there are too many advertisements promoting alcoholic beverages.

## Strategies to Consider

- Prohibit advertisements of alcohol-related brands and products:
  - In public spaces;
  - Near places frequented mainly by minors;
  - Along roads and highways.

# 6

## Adding warning messages to alcoholic beverages packaging

### The effectiveness of warnings on packaging

- Health warnings can help limit the effects of advertising designed to create a positive association with certain lifestyles and feelings and contribute to fostering a socio-cultural environment favorable to the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits.<sup>154</sup>
- There are still very few studies on alcoholic beverage warning labels, but current data indicate potential for reducing alcohol purchase or consumption intentions and actual alcohol consumption.<sup>155</sup>
- This type of labelling would improve knowledge of the risks of alcohol consumption<sup>156</sup>, including cancer, and promote support for preventive measures, but alone it would not be an effective measure to reduce dangerous alcohol consumption.<sup>157, 158, 159, 160, 161</sup>
- This measure would be most effective with a population with limited knowledge of the health risks associated with alcohol consumption.<sup>162</sup>
- Consumers who are more vulnerable to the risks of alcohol consumption, such as young people, pregnant women and heavy drinkers seem to pay more attention to warning messages. Years of exposure to warnings also increase the proportion of the population that notices them.<sup>163</sup>

- Pregnancy alcohol warning labelling promotes dialogue among pregnant women who drink alcohol and their health care providers and encourages abstinence among those who do not drink or drink little alcohol during their pregnancy.<sup>164</sup>
- To ensure their effectiveness, warnings should be deployed as part of a global strategy including the adoption of other public policies with a similar objective. In addition, warnings should be clear, visible, and simple, with their message feature prominently.<sup>165</sup>

### The situation in Quebec and Canada

- In 11 of 13 Canadian provinces and territories, there are no targeted warning labels on alcohol containers. In the two territories where they exist, these labels "do not follow recommended practices and are applied in accordance with a policy enforced in-store, instead of being imposed to manufacturers by law".<sup>166</sup>
- Certain facts about alcohol consumption still seem to be unknown or misunderstood:
  - ◊ **Concept of the standard drink** – Many consumers overestimate what constitutes a standard drink and, by extension, underestimate their consumption. Young people under the age of 25 are among the least educated on the concept of the standard drink (16% understand the concept very well).<sup>167, 168</sup>
  - ◊ **Alcohol and cancer** – In Canada, alcohol is perceived as dangerous only when consumed in large quantities and its link to cancer is not always understood.<sup>169, 170</sup> More than 8 out of 10 Quebecers claim to be aware that alcohol can cause certain cancers. However, more than half believe that drinking alcohol in moderation is safe and more than a third believe it may even have some health benefits.<sup>171</sup> However, evidence confirms that alcohol consumption can cause at least seven types of cancer and is directly linked to higher risks of cancer.<sup>172</sup>
  - ◊ **Alcohol and pregnancy** – At least 2 out of 5 Quebecers consider it safe for the health of the unborn baby if a pregnant woman drinks alcohol once a month and a quarter believe it is safe for pregnant women to drink once a week. Half of respondents do not know what fetal alcohol disorders are.<sup>173</sup>

## Current policies

- Quebec imposes no mandatory health warnings on alcoholic beverages. Some manufacturers may affix warnings to the containers of their products in the form of text or pictograms, but only on a voluntary basis.
- Canadian law states that certain information must be included on the labels and packaging of alcoholic beverages, such as alcohol content, allergens and ingredients. Certain rules also govern the claims that can be made about these products.<sup>174</sup>
- In Quebec, beer containers must also bear the mention “*Québec. Droits acquittés*” under the terms of the *Regulation respecting the prescribed manner of marking a beer container* (CQLR T-0.1, r.1).

## Economic impacts

- The cost of implementing such a measure is estimated to be minimal or very low.<sup>175</sup>

## Popular support

- In 2022, 72 % of Quebecers aged 15 and over believed that alcohol containers should include warnings about the risks associated with alcohol consumption.<sup>176</sup>
- 77 % of Quebecers surveyed in June 2021 by Léger on behalf of the ASPQ agreed with the obligation to include warnings on the dangers of alcohol consumption during pregnancy on containers of alcoholic beverages and 80% agreed that such messages should be displayed at alcohol outlets.
- Nearly a third of those surveyed supported the inclusion of severe warning messages on alcoholic beverage containers, similar as those on cigarette packets, and 66% supported the idea of displaying information on moderate alcohol consumption.<sup>177</sup>
- Canadians tend to prefer larger labels and messages about the size of a standard drink, low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines (with pictograms), risks of diseases such as cancer and risks during pregnancy.<sup>178</sup>

## Examples of measures

- In the Yukon, small warning stickers on alcohol and pregnancy have been affixed to containers since the mid-1990s: *Warning: drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects*. A pilot project funded by the Government of Canada in 2017 aimed to create a large mandatory warning label with coloured pictograms and messages about FASD, standard drinks and cancer. The warning about cancer risks was dropped following intense lobbying from the alcohol industry.<sup>179, 180, 181</sup>
- Health Canada requires warning labels on caffeinated energy drink containers. These warnings include information about recommended servings, risks for children and pregnant women, and risks of mixing with alcohol.<sup>182</sup> The draft regulation currently under consideration retains this requirement<sup>183</sup>, but the warnings should be made more visible.<sup>184</sup>
- Several countries require<sup>185</sup> that warnings about health risks, drinking during pregnancy, and impaired driving be affixed to alcohol containers or certain types of alcohol, including Ireland<sup>186</sup>, South Korea<sup>187</sup> and the United States.<sup>188</sup> The European Parliament is also considering such measures.<sup>189</sup>

## Strategies to consider

- ▶ As part of a global strategy to encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce alcohol-related harm, decision makers should consider imposing warnings on alcoholic beverage containers to highlight the risks of alcohol consumption. Inspiration can be drawn from similar measures that exist in other provinces and countries.
- ▶ In addition to health and safety warnings, labels could include low-risk drinking guidelines, a health warning, a calorie count and the number of standard drinks included.<sup>190, 191</sup>
- ▶ The size and location of messages on the bottle are also important to ensure their visibility and effectiveness.<sup>192</sup> They should be placed prominently, be clear and concise, rotated regularly, and accompanied by images.<sup>193</sup>

# Conclusion

As highlighted in the report *L'alcool au Québec* : *une consommation soutenue par une norme sociale favorable*, alcohol is widely consumed and accepted in Quebec: it has even become part of our culture. This means that we are overexposed to it in our various living environments and through abundant advertising.<sup>194</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the consumption of alcohol has, in many cases, become trivialized.

Yet, despite popular beliefs and perceptions, alcohol can have negative effects on physical and mental health and cause short- and long-term harm. It is a major public health and safety issue that generates social and health costs worth several billion dollars, in addition to avoidable suffering.

Fortunately, as shown in this document, several legislative measures and public policies are known to be effective or considered promising to mitigate these harmful effects. The Quebec and Canadian governments both have many tools to consider to achieve their objectives in this area.



# Appendix

## Overview of alcohol laws, regulations and policies

In Canada, the manufacture, distribution, marketing, and consumption of alcoholic beverages are governed by policies, laws and regulations at both the federal and provincial levels. These powers are shared between the two levels of government in accordance with the Constitution Act of 1867 (arts. 91 and 92).<sup>195</sup> Some are exclusive to one government, while others are overseen by both levels of government.

Quebec nevertheless enjoys considerable legislative latitude in this area. For information purposes, Table 1 provides a non-exhaustive summary of the main areas of provincial and federal jurisdiction in alcohol-related matters.



TABLE 1: Summary of main alcohol jurisdictions\*

Federal	Provincial
Packaging and labelling	Consumer sales in the province or territory
Manufacturing	Issuance of licences for manufacture and sale within province or territory
Interprovincial trade	Publicity and advertising (affecting the province/territory)
Publicity and advertising (general standards affecting all provinces [TV and radio])	Distribution in province or territory
Federal taxes and excise duties	Pricing in the province or territory (may involve international agreements under federal jurisdiction)
Compliance with and negotiation of international trade agreements	Road safety standards (criminal offences)
Criminal offences	Peace and public order (municipalities)
	Provincial sales tax
	Labelling for products sold only in the province or territory

\* Important note: such a summary cannot take into consideration the various legal and juris-prudential nuances and exceptions.

### Ministerial responsibilities within the Quebec government

In Quebec, several ministries hold responsibilities related to the alcoholic beverage sector. For example, since August 2019, the Ministry of Economy and Innovation has been responsible for the "economic development of the alcoholic beverages sector" and the "management of the *Programme d'appui au positionnement des alcools québécois dans le réseau de la Société des alcools du Québec*".<sup>196</sup> The Ministry of Public Security oversees the application of the laws through the *Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux*, while the Ministry of Finances is responsible for the application of parts of the *Act respecting the Société des alcools du Québec*.

## Overview of laws, regulations and policies in effect in Quebec

In its role as a competent government authority, Quebec and its agents (public bodies, cities and municipalities, for example) have adopted laws, regulations, public policies, interdepartmental policies and guidelines with respect to the sale, distribution and consumption of alcohol. Table 2 provides an overview of the main federal laws and

regulations that are applicable in Quebec; while Table 3 summarizes the measures adopted at the provincial level. Finally, this document includes a list of various government policies dealing with alcohol consumption. This is an overview of the main texts and some may have been omitted.

**TABLE 2: Federal Alcohol Laws and Regulations**

Law or legislation in effect	Content	Regulations and standards adopted under the law
<i>Food and Drugs Act</i>	Sale, marketing, packaging, advertising, products, definitions, violations	<i>Food and Drug Regulations (Part B – Foods)</i>
		<i>Regulations Amending the Food and Drug Regulations (Flavoured Purified Alcohol)</i>
<i>Safe Food for Canadians Act</i>	Marketing, transportation, inspection	<i>Safe Food for Canadians Regulations</i>
		<i>Canadian Standards of Identity: Volume 8 – Icewine</i>
<i>Criminal Code</i>	Impaired driving, BAC limit, violations and penalties (ss. 320.11 to 320.4)	<i>An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences relating to conveyances) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts</i>
<i>Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act (CRTC)</i>	Powers, creation and constitution	
<i>Broadcasting Act</i>	Powers, creation and constitution, application of regulations	<i>Radio Regulations, 1986</i>
		<i>Television Broadcasting Regulations, 1987</i>
		<i>Code for broadcast advertising of alcoholic beverages (CRTC)</i>
		<i>Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-436</i>
<i>Excise Act</i>	Definitions, taxes	<i>Brewery Regulations</i>
<i>Excise Act, 2001</i>	Taxes, marketing, sale [Alcohol (Part 4 – art. 59 et seq.)]	<i>Regulations Respecting the Information to be Displayed on Alcohol Containers and their Packaging</i>
<i>Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act</i>	Marketing and sale	
<i>Competition Act</i>	Marketing, sale, advertising, violations and pricing	
<i>Agreement Between Canada and the European Community on Trade in Wines and Spirit Drinks</i>	Sale, trade	

**TABLE 3: Quebec Alcohol Laws and Regulations**

Law in effect	Content	Regulations adopted under the law
<i>Act respecting liquor permits</i>	Permits – sale and trade	<p><i>Regulation respecting the conditions relating to the issue and use of a "Man and his World" permit and an "Olympic Grounds" permit</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting certain documents relating to the Act respecting liquor permits</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting duties and costs payable under the Act respecting liquor permits</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting lay-out standards for establishments</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting liquor permits</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting promotion, advertising and educational programs relating to alcoholic beverages</i></p>
<i>Act respecting offences relating to alcoholic beverages</i>	Administrative penalties – licence holders – sale and trade	
<i>Act respecting the Société des alcools du Québec</i>	Sale and trade – Government corporation – Organization and powers	<p><i>Purchase and Bottling of Spirits Regulation</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting alcoholic beverages made with beer</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting alcoholic beverages made and bottled by holders of a distiller's permit</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting cider and other apple-based alcoholic beverages</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting the duties and costs payable under the Act respecting the Société des alcools du Québec</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting the terms of sale of alcoholic beverages by holders of a grocery permit</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting the possession and transportation into Québec of alcoholic beverages acquired in another province or a territory of Canada</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting use of raw materials by holders of a small-scale wine producer's permit</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting the sale of beer for consumption elsewhere</i></p> <p><i>Regulation respecting wine and other alcoholic beverages made or bottled by holders of a wine maker's permit</i></p>
<i>Highway Safety Code</i>	BAC limit — Administrative sanctions — Impaired driving	
<i>Act respecting the Québec sales tax</i>		<p><i>Regulation respecting the prescribed manner of identifying a beer container</i></p>
		<p><i>Regulation respecting the Québec sales tax</i></p>
<i>Act respecting the Société québécoise de récupération et de recyclage</i>	Deposits on containers — Beer — Sale and trade	
<i>Licenses Act</i>	Licence de Revenu Québec	
<i>An Act respecting development of the small-scale alcoholic beverage industry</i>	Fabrication, embouteillage et vente par les producteurs artisans pour le compte des titulaires de permis de production artisanale	

## **Major government policies, strategies, and action plans related to alcohol consumption and the adoption of healthy lifestyles** (documents in French)

- Plan d'action en santé et bien-être des femmes 2020-2024 du MSSS<sup>197</sup>
- Plan stratégique 2021-2025 de la Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux<sup>198</sup>
- Plan stratégique du ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux 2019-2023<sup>199</sup>
- Politique de périnatalité 2008-2018<sup>200</sup>
- Politique gouvernementale de prévention en santé<sup>201</sup>
  - ◊ Plan d'action interministériel 2017-2021<sup>202</sup>
  - ◊ Plan d'action interministériel en santé mentale 2022-2026<sup>203</sup>
  - ◊ Le soutien à l'action intersectorielle favorable à la santé : Stratégie ministérielle (2017)<sup>204</sup>
- Politique gouvernementale sur l'allègement réglementaire et administratif<sup>205</sup>
- Politique nationale de lutte à l'itinérance<sup>206</sup>
  - ◊ Plan d'action interministériel en itinérance 2021-2026<sup>207</sup>
- Politique québécoise de la jeunesse 2030<sup>208</sup>
  - ◊ Plan d'action jeunesse 2021-2024<sup>209</sup>
- Programme national de santé publique 2015-2025<sup>210</sup>
- Stratégie gouvernementale de développement durable 2015-2020 (prolongée jusqu'au 31 mars 2022)<sup>211</sup>
- Stratégie gouvernementale pour assurer l'occupation et la vitalité des territoires 2018-2022<sup>212</sup>
  - ◊ Plan d'action du ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux 2020-2022<sup>213</sup>
- Stratégie gouvernementale pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes vers 2021<sup>214</sup>
- Stratégie nationale 2018-2020 pour prévenir les surdoses d'opioïdes et y répondre<sup>215</sup>
  - ◊ Plan d'action interministériel en dépendance 2018-2028<sup>216</sup>
- Stratégie de prévention en sécurité routière 2021-2023<sup>217</sup>
- Politique de mobilité durable 2030<sup>218</sup>
  - ◊ Plan stratégique de la Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec 2021-2025<sup>219</sup>



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