

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

I am writing on behalf an incident that occurred at the Wave last Thursday. My friends and I were at the bar enjoying some music until one of the bouncer's accused one of [my] friends for sniffing cocaine in the washroom and sneaking in vodka, even though there was no evidence to prove this. To make matters worse, another bouncer who wasn't even working that night insulted her. At that point I defended her and [he responded] "this [is] none of your business." Petty sure that if one his friends was in the same situation he would stick [up] for them too. On the top, the bartenders apparently blackmailed the [band] and by telling them to reveal her last name or they would not get paid. Up until now I have been a regular customer, but until the staff apologizes for their behavior, I will only go on nights when there is no cover and not spend a cent on drinks or food.

Chris Carson

## Alcohol: Canadians' Favourite Drug and Most Deadly

Matthew Gauk

*The Martlet (University of Victoria)*

Estimates show that over 1,700 deaths were wholly or partly caused by excess alcohol consumption in B.C. in 2003, compared to 185 deaths directly due to illicit drugs.

"The big point of this is to benchmark Canadian drinking patterns; the extent to which British Columbians and Canadians drink [compared] to the recommended guidelines of health and safety," said Dr. Tim Stockwell, the director of CARBC and a UVic psychology professor.

"Only a minority of alcohol in Canada is consumed in a way which is consistent with the guidelines."

In this first CARBC Statistical Bulletin, data from the 2004 Canadian Addiction Survey (CAS) is used to address questions relating to the extent to which alcohol use in B.C. and Canada complies with guidelines for low-risk drinking. The bulletin found that while 73 per cent of all reported alcohol consumption was in excess of Canadian low risk drinking guidelines, the CAS still greatly underestimated alcohol consumption.

The risks that accompany heavy drinking are either short term or long term. Short-term risks are the more obvious, from tripping and falling to violent fights and car crashes. Less obvious may be the dangers of alcohol poisoning, or the long-term health risks resulting from steady, long-term use of the toxic substance.

"There are 60 ways alcohol can kill you," said Stockwell. "With regular consumption, you might not be getting drunk but you're still rotting your organs and increasing the risk of cancer."

Over 90 per cent of the alcohol consumption reported by males aged 15 to 24 years was consumed in excess of Canadian guidelines and over 85 per cent of that consumed by young females exceeded the guidelines.

For this age group, says Stockwell, the short-term risks are of more concern: The risk of suicide, violence, and the risk young people who drink need to be most aware of—overdosing.

"When you're having a party, give some thought in advance to safety. Look out for your friends, make sure they're OK, and make sure they don't lose consciousness from drinking, because that can actually be life threatening."

Part of the purpose of the bulletin is to inform the debate over regulation. The question isn't about prohibition or a laissez faire free-for-all, says Stockwell, but rather about the thousands of different regulations, from taxation to availability, that make up government policy on alcohol.

"What's the right level of regulation to tolerate and respect?" asked Stockwell.

"This is a major issue we need to look at. To put it out here for discussion and debate, this is something we need to take seriously." Scott Macdonald, the assistant director of research at CARBC, points out that while alcohol consumption is a fairly universal reality, drinking habits can vary considerably from country to country.

In some European countries, teens will often have a little bit of alcohol with their meals at home.

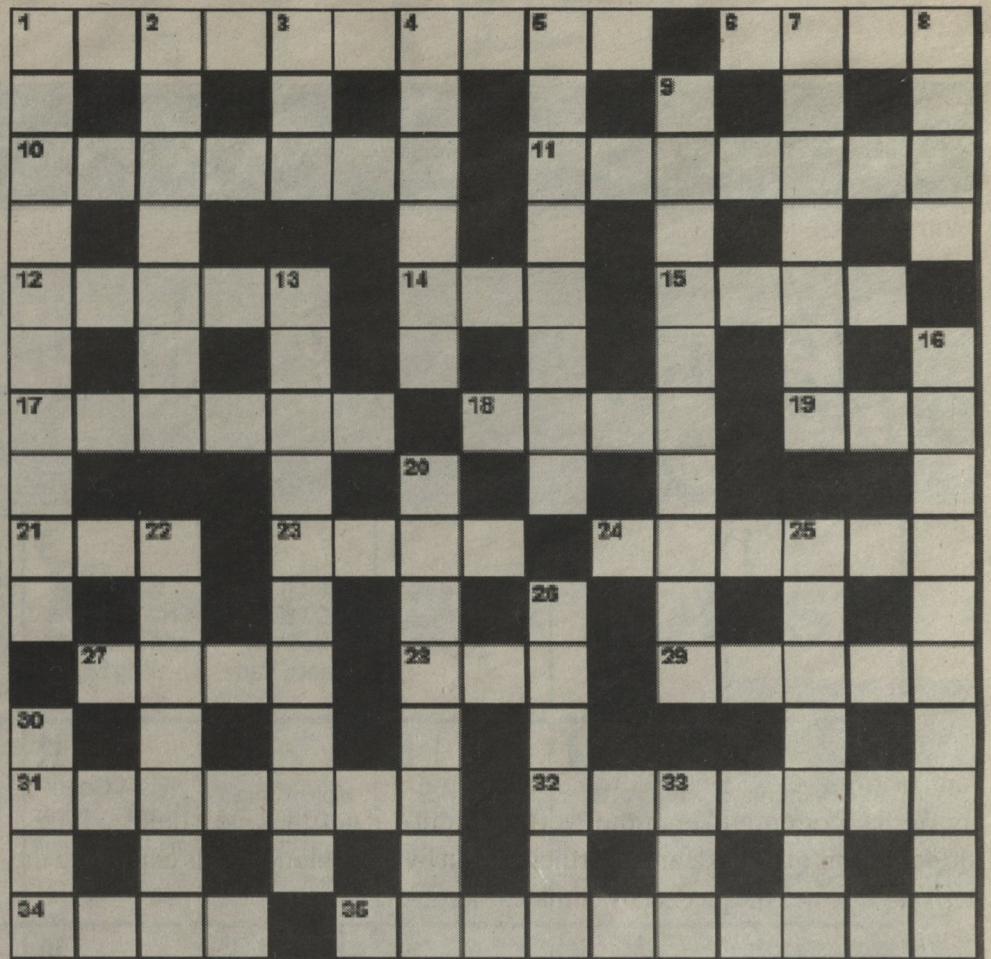
"In our society, drinking is a kind of rite of passage into adulthood," said Macdonald. "Younger people experiment with alcohol—they don't know what it's like to get drunk."

The idea that it is healthy to drink a glass of red wine a day can be taken out of context. Any benefits to drinking alcohol accrue equally, says Stockwell, adding they don't just apply to red wine.

"The trick is to drink a little sometimes, not any more than that, or else all the risks rapidly swamp the benefits of elevated drinking habits," said Stockwell.

"Safe drinking means avoiding excess in either way."

## This Week's Cadre Crossword



Across

- 1 Dry land (5,5)
- 6 Complacent (4)
- 10 Regarded with respect (7)
- 11 Inflated (7)
- 12 Small insectivore (5)
- 14 Organ of hearing (3)
- 15 Expel (4)
- 17 Fashions (6)
- 18 Italian white wine (4)
- 19 Flagpole marking position of golf hole (3)
- 21 Possess (3)
- 23 Shelf below window (4)
- 24 Affectedly stylish (6)
- 27 Move (4)
- 28 Adhesive (3)
- 29 Unkind (5)
- 31 Paper-folding art (7)
- 32 Unvarying (7)
- 34 Enormous (4) 35 Talkative person (10)

Down

- 1 Process of changing (10)
- 2 Deep regret (7)
- 3 Tune (3)
- 4 Certainty (6)
- 5 Doubt (8)
- 7 Timid person (7)
- 8 Departed (4)
- 9 Formed of a single large block of stone (10)
- 13 Rife (10)
- 16 Disappointing (10)
- 20 Lethargic (8)
- 22 Nil (7)
- 25 SI unit of electric charge (7)
- 26 Quantity (6)
- 30 Reluctant (4)
- 33 Diamonds (3)

### Last Issue's Solution

