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**TO:** Chair and members of the Board of Health

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## **Recommendations**

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It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1. Receive this report for information.**

## **Key Points**

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- Alcohol is a serious health and safety issue in Guelph and Wellington County
- *Last Call: Real Stories of Alcohol's Impact in Guelph and Wellington County* campaign was launched on December 8, 2017 to raise awareness of the impact of alcohol on individuals and the community and to raise awareness about local alcohol related harms.
- *Last Call* features video stories of real people in Guelph and Wellington County to highlight local harms. Perspectives include: people with lived-experience of alcoholism, police officers, physicians, a student, a parent, healthcare professionals and a politician.
- *Last Call* has had a broad reach in Guelph and Wellington County. Videos have been viewed over 300,000 times, and there have been over 2400 visits to the website by over 1700 unique users.
- Preliminary data from the evaluation survey show that *Last Call* was successful in achieving its objectives.

# Discussion

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## Introduction

On December 8, 2017, the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy (WGDS) and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) launched the *Last Call: Real Stories of Alcohol's Impact in Guelph and Wellington County* campaign. *Last Call* is a public education and awareness campaign featuring video interviews with diverse community members, including: people with lived-experience of alcoholism, police officers, physicians, a student, a parent, healthcare professionals and a politician. Each person tells a story of how alcohol impacts their lives. *Last Call* aims to start a conversation about all the ways that alcohol causes harm to individuals and communities. The campaign also highlights local resources and services available to individuals and families related to alcohol-use.

*Last Call* used a variety of communication channels to reach a diverse adult audience. Videos were created from interviews with community members. The videos were hosted on the [alcoholstories.ca](http://alcoholstories.ca) website, which also includes content related to the local impact of alcohol and community resources for help with alcohol issues. Select videos from the campaign were featured in pre-show advertisements at the two (2) Galaxy Cinemas, in Guelph, from December 2017 to March 2018. The *Last Call* videos and website were also promoted through unpaid social media posts, paid social media advertisements, blog posts and community partner organizations.

## Rationale

*Last Call* was developed because alcohol is a serious health and safety issue in Guelph and Wellington County. Canadian Community Health Survey data show that more Guelph and Wellington County residents drink in a high-risk way compared to the rest of Ontario.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol is linked to over 200 diseases, including cancer, and results in hundreds of hospitalizations in Wellington County, Dufferin County and the City of Guelph each year, resulting in a burden to the healthcare system.<sup>1</sup> Almost 34% of traffic fatalities, in Canada, are linked to alcohol use.<sup>2</sup> Alcohol is linked with crime, family and intimate partner violence, trauma, and vandalism.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol causes many consequences for individuals, families and communities that are not often talked about. *Last Call* aims to raise awareness and start a conversation about those consequences.

## Community Stories

*Last Call* featured real people from Guelph and Wellington County sharing their experiences with alcohol. Their stories offered diverse perspectives about the different types of harm that alcohol causes in Guelph and Wellington County. This section of the report will provide a brief synopsis of some of those stories.

The first person that was interviewed was Bob. He is a Guelph resident that struggled with alcoholism for much of his life. He offered a poignant perspective on the impact that alcohol can have on a person's personal and professional life.

"I would spend the mortgage money drinking, I would spend the utility money drinking...stop in after work with all intentions of going home and having spaghetti with the family, and at

midnight or one o'clock, I'm still in that bar. Never able to say, I'm going for two and I just have two." – Bob, Guelph Resident.

Sue is another Guelph resident who discussed her personal experience of alcoholism and offered hope to others who are struggling.

"I found that there were a lot of misconceptions about alcoholism when I sobered up myself. There was a belief that it was a defect of character to drink" – Sue, Guelph Resident

We interviewed Dr. Digby, Chief of Emergency Medicine, at the Guelph General Hospital. He expressed that alcohol-related injuries and illnesses are having a significant impact on hospital staff and resources.

"We see a tremendous number of patients in our hospital with alcohol-related medical concerns, injuries and emotional and mental health concerns" – Dr. Digby, Chief of Emergency Medicine at Guelph General Hospital.

Marylou, a Constable with the Wellington OPP, discussed the consequences of drinking and driving and the alcohol-related situations that she encounters as a police officer.

"If you're that officer that has to go to a family's door and notify them that their loved one has been killed by a drunk driver, that's a really bad day." – Marylou, Wellington OPP Officer.

Dr. Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDGPH, explained the links between alcohol and a number of chronic illnesses, including cancer. She also touched on the personal consequences of high-risk alcohol use.

"There's a lot of grief, regret, and sadness from all of the effects of alcohol. For those who do not misuse alcohol, it's often associated with good times. It is difficult to separate the two, but for those who've been touched by the negative consequences of alcohol, it is a very serious and significant problem." – Dr. Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDGPH.

Gabby, a student at the University of Guelph, shared her experience as a student and member of the First Response Team. Gabby shared that fewer students consume alcohol than most people expect.

"Most students think that over 90 percent of their peers drink or consume alcohol on a fairly regular basis but in fact it's actually far less than that." – Gabby, a University of Guelph student.

Joe, a paramedic in Wellington County, shared his experiences of being assaulted by drunk patients and how alcohol impacts paramedic resources in Guelph and Wellington County.

"It's interesting to see how alcohol can change someone's personality." – Joe, Paramedic at Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service.

Laurie, a mother of two children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) shared her experience raising her children, trying to navigate the support system, and her commitment to prevention of FASD.

"I think there are a lot of mixed messages, a lot of misinformation ... that it's okay to have one drink or it is okay if you just drink beer ... but the reality is that it can be one drink that

causes brain damage.” – Laurie, mother of two children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

## Campaign Results

*Last Call*'s videos were shown at Galaxy Cinemas, in Guelph, and shared on alcoholstories.ca, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. The videos, to-date, have over 300,000 views. The campaign earned over 1000 engagements on social media, including link-clicks, shared content, comments, and reactions. Most people who viewed the videos on YouTube were between the ages of 25-34 years of age (29%), of which 54% were male and 46% were female. The website has been visited over 2400 times by over 1700 unique viewers since its launch in December 2017.

An online evaluation survey is being conducted to assess the reach and impact of *Last Call*, as well as the community's perspectives on the campaign. Preliminary results are currently available from the survey. So far, over 400 responses have been collected. 20% of respondents recalled hearing about *Last Call* and 15% of respondents recalled actually seeing *Last Call* content (e.g. videos, social media posts, or the website). Facebook ads, WDGPH Facebook page and Cineplex were the top three places that respondents saw content from *Last Call*. Half of respondents who saw the *Last Call* content reported that their awareness of alcohol-related harms in the community had increased. Over 50% of respondents who had seen the campaign reported that *Last Call* increased their knowledge about where to get help for alcohol or substance-use issues in Guelph and Wellington County. Lastly, 60% of people who saw the campaign took some action after seeing the *Last Call* content.

## Conclusion

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Although paid promotion for the *Last Call* campaign has officially ended, WDGPH will continue to promote the campaign to ensure that the investment in the creation of the campaign continues to have an impact. WDGPH and the WGDS plan to share the campaign through presentations at local organizations and a travelling video tour that can be placed in various locations throughout the community. Unpaid promotion through social media will occur during awareness weeks and celebrations tied with alcohol and substance use.

WDGPH has created a five (5) year alcohol harm prevention strategy with a vision of “A community that is free from alcohol related harm”.<sup>3</sup> That strategy was created based on the best available research evidence and input from experts and members of the community. WDGPH will capitalize on the success of the *Last Call* campaign to support the upcoming activities in the strategy action plan. WDGPH will continue to work with the OPHA alcohol work group to advocate for responsible provincial and federal policy around alcohol. WDGPH will also begin to work with municipalities to explore municipal policy approaches to reduce alcohol-related harms. Since youth were not a target audience of the *Last Call* campaign, WDGPH will continue the development of a Mental Health Promotion Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention (MHSMAP) program for elementary school students in partnership with the Dufferin Coalition for Kids. WDGPH and the WGDS will also continue to mobilize community members to discuss further potential next steps to help prevent alcohol-related harms.

# Ontario Public Health Standard

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## Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being Standard

The board of health shall develop and implement a program of public health interventions using a comprehensive health promotion approach that addresses chronic disease risk and protective factors to reduce the burden of illness from chronic diseases in the health unit population

## Substance Use and Injury Prevention Standard

The board of health shall develop and implement a program of public health interventions using a comprehensive health promotion approach that addresses risk and protective factors to reduce the burden of preventable injuries and substance use in the health unit population

## Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Guideline, 2018:

The board of health shall collaborate with local partners in health and other sectors to develop programs and services that address varying substance use patterns in order to reduce the burdens associated with substance use including: (a) Preventing or delaying substance use; (b) Preventing problematic substance use; (c) Reducing harms associated with substance use; (d) Re-orienting health services to meet population needs; and/or (e) Contributing to the planning of and referral to treatment and other services to meet population needs

## WDGPH Strategic Direction(s)

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- Health Equity:** We will provide programs and services that integrate health equity principles to reduce or eliminate health differences between population groups.
- Organizational Capacity:** We will improve our capacity to effectively deliver public health programs and services.
- Service Centred Approach:** We are committed to providing excellent service to anyone interacting with WDG Public Health.
- Building Healthy Communities:** We will work with communities to support the health and well-being of everyone.

## Health Equity

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The relationship between alcohol and the social determinants of health is complex. Alcohol consumption patterns are influenced both directly and indirectly by social, economic and health factors.<sup>4</sup> Alcohol-use can both create and exacerbate vulnerable situations. For example, lack of employment options may lead to alcohol misuse as a coping mechanism or alcohol misuse may lead to unemployment.<sup>5</sup>

Locally, Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph residents are more likely to exceed Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines (LRADG) compared to the rest of Ontario. Residents aged 19-24 years are most likely to drink alcohol in a way that exceeds the LRADG. The 25-44 years-old age group are the second most likely group to drink alcohol in excess of the LRADG. Finally, men are much more likely to exceed the LRADG compared to females.<sup>1</sup>

Although *Last Call* targeted the general population, the campaign was successful in reaching the most high-risk groups of people who drink alcohol in a high risk way – young adults and males, specifically. Of viewers of the *Last Call* campaign on YouTube, 29% were between the ages of 25-34 and 54% of those were male. *Last Call* was able to reach the young-adult demographic; 20% of viewers were between the ages of 18-24 and 52% of those were male. These results show that YouTube advertising provides an opportunity to engage both younger demographics and males, groups that are more vulnerable to alcohol-related harms and traditionally more difficult to reach.

## References

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## Appendices

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N/A.