

Why was the time limit on 'happy hours' in place?

The 8 p.m. limit on 'happy hours' was introduced in 2008, along with two additional policies aimed at helping to make provincial drinking establishments safer for staff and patrons: minimum drink prices for liquor consumed on-premises and a limit on the number of drinks a patron can order or possess after 1 a.m.

Why did the AGLC remove the 8 p.m. limit on 'happy hours'?

Since 2008, licensees who chose to run reduced-price drinks specials had to either end the specials at 8 p.m., offer reduced-price drinks for the entire business day or not run the specials at all. For example, in situations where licensees wanted to offer drinks specials during the evening televised sporting events, they had no other choice but to run 'all day' drinks specials.

This means the 'happy hours' policy was not effective in meeting the original intent and contributing to safer and more responsible drinking environments. It also means the policy was not effective in supporting a progressive business environment, where licensees are able to provide their patrons with a quality entertainment experience that includes safe and responsible liquor service.

Many licensees have requested an end to the 8 p.m. 'happy hour' limit in order to have greater flexibility in managing drinks specials, while maintaining the core social responsibility and public safety obligations.

What does the new policy for 'happy hours' say?

The new policy states that licensees may offer reduced drink prices at any time during operating hours provided the prices comply with other policies related to liquor pricing such as minimum drink prices.

Minimum drink prices

At no time may a licensee sell a drink for less than:

Spirits and liqueurs: \$2.75 / 28.5 ml (1 oz) or less;

Wine: \$0.35 / 28.5 ml (1 oz);

Draught beer: \$0.16 / 28.5 ml (1 oz); and

Bottled/Canned Beer,

Cider or Coolers: \$2.75 /341 ml bottle or 355 ml can.

Will this change lead to more heavy drinking in liquor licensed venues?

In keeping with its promise to provide choices Albertans can trust, the AGLC strives to make sure all of its policies are effective in supporting safe and responsible drinking environments. It was recognized that the 8 p.m. limit on 'happy hours' was not meeting this objective; therefore, the limit was eliminated.

Excessive alcohol consumption is an ongoing concern. The AGLC continues to work with industry and community partners on reducing liquor-related harm and enabling Albertans to make healthy choices through moderation. To this end, the AGLC continues to invest in public awareness campaigns to encourage a culture of moderation and address high-risk drinking behaviours like binge drinking and pre-drinking. The main goal is to make young people more aware of the merits of having fun and, at the same time, keeping their drinking within personal limits.

In addition to awareness campaigns, the AGLC has a number of programs in place to promote responsible liquor service and consumption, including regulated minimum drink prices and training programs for servers and security staff in licensed venues.

At all times during operating hours, liquor licensees and their staff are expected to follow all requirements for responsible liquor service.

Will eliminating the 8 p.m. limit on 'happy hours' lead to more violence in licensed venues?

The AGLC has found that, in practice, the 8 p.m. limit on 'happy hours' was not effectively supporting safe and responsible drinking environments.

The policies related to minimum drink prices and the limit on the number of drinks a patron can order or possess after 1 a.m. remain in effect as they have been recognized as important tools in reducing intoxication and maintaining safe drinking environments.

In many jurisdictions, regulated minimum drink prices and limits on drink orders at last call have been in place to help in managing consumption and incidents of violent behaviour among large crowds in liquor licensed venues. Set minimum prices for drinks and limits on orders at last call essentially help minimize the potential for young people to drink too much in short periods of time, which, in turn, helps minimize the risk for violent behaviour to develop in liquor licensed venues.

In addition to policies that help support safe and responsible drinking environments, the AGLC recognizes the value of having many different tools to help address liquor-related harm. The examples include:

- Mandatory industry training (ProServe and ProTect): responsible liquor service training for staff who serve or sell liquor that instructs how to prevent underage drinking; reduce alcohol over-consumption; reduce impaired driving; and, reduce the risk of violence.
- Best Bar None: a voluntary program for bars, pubs and clubs that strive to reduce bar-related violence by raising service and management standards and rewarding excellence.
- Membership in the Alberta Safer Bars Council: a provincial advisory group on liquor service policy development and the implementation of best practices to help reduce violence in licensed venues.

The AGLC remains committed to reducing harm caused by excessive alcohol consumption, and continues to work with industry and community partners to enable Albertans to recognize the merits of moderate liquor consumption.

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