

# Minimum alcohol price policies in action: The Canadian Experience

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# Grateful thanks to

Colleagues at the:

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*Sheffield School of Applied Research, Sheffield University, UK*

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# All of Canada's 10 provinces set minimum prices for alcohol in liquor stores and/or bars





# A private liquor store in Victoria, British Columbia, 2013



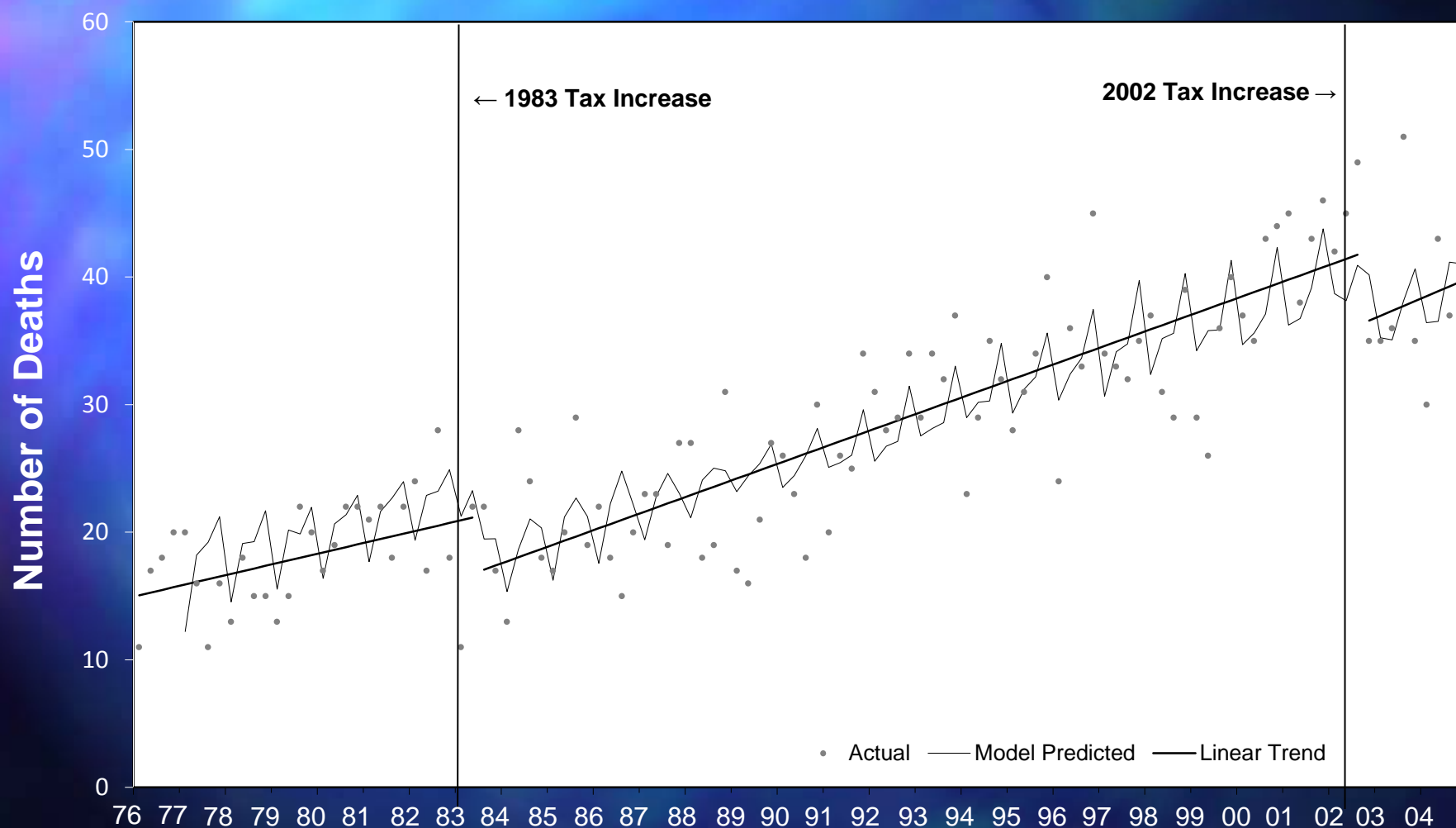
# Rationale for Alcohol Price Policies

*Despite popular beliefs to the  
contrary...*

**Increased alcohol prices lead to  
reduced rates of illnesses and  
injuries associated with heavy  
drinking patterns**



# Effects of two tax increases on deaths from alcohol related diseases in Alaska



# Hazardous drinkers seek out less expensive alcohol

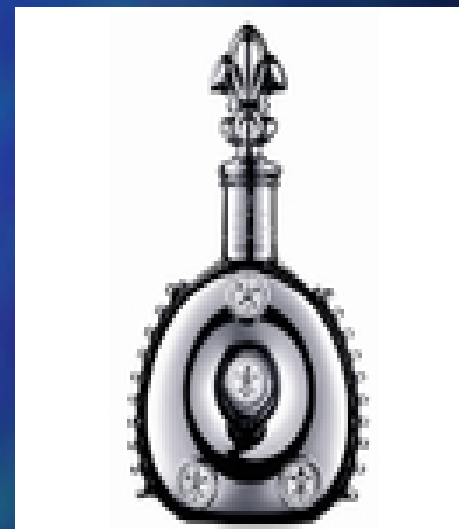
*3 retail prices in \$/standard drink (13.45g)*



**Cheapest**  
**58 cents**



**Median**  
**\$3.25**



**Most expensive**  
**\$994**

**Do increases in minimum  
alcohol prices lead to  
reduced consumption?**



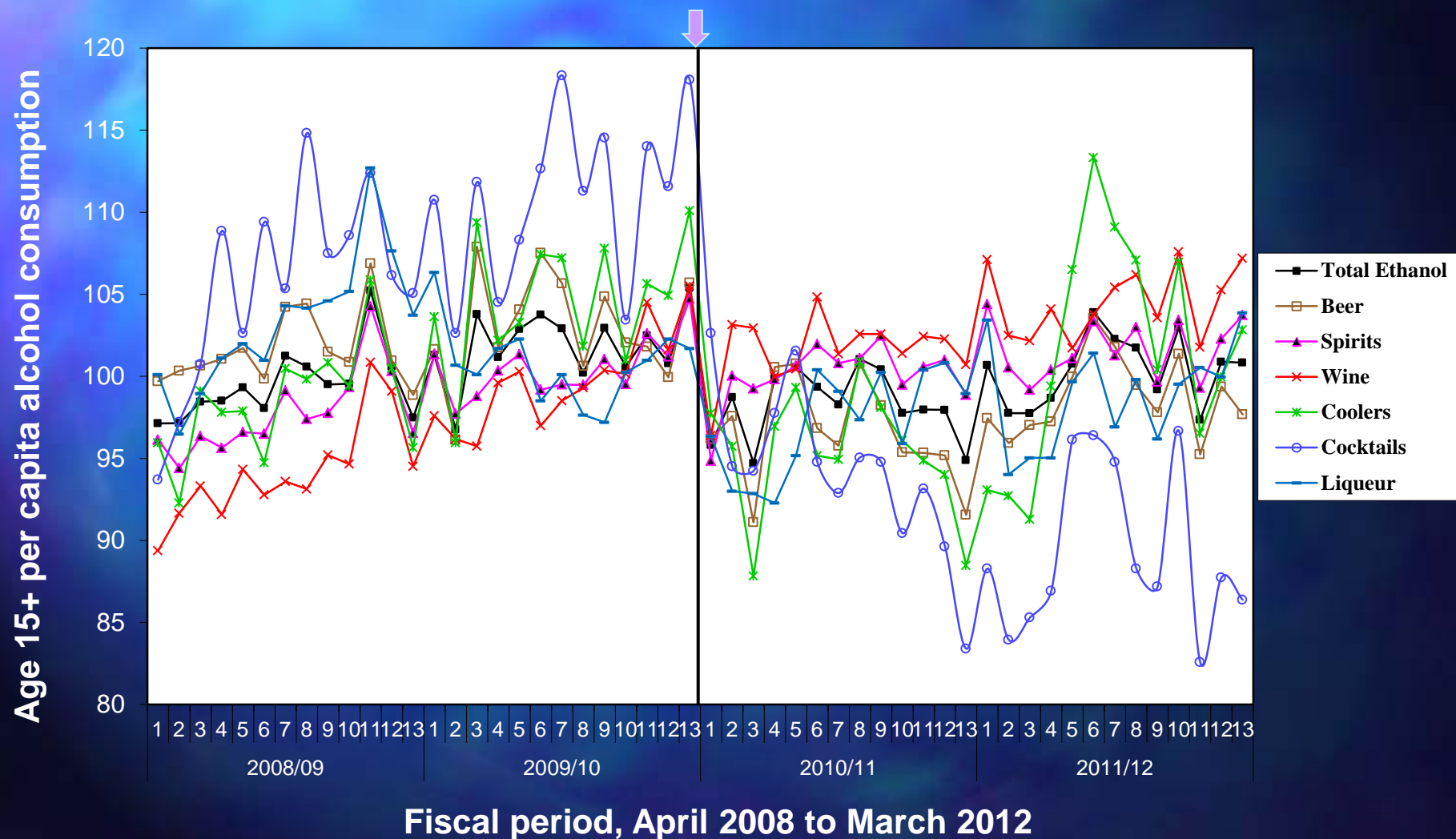
# Case Study: Saskatchewan

- Evaluation of a public health inspired proposal to increase all minimum prices SIMULTANEOUSLY with higher prices for higher strength beverages [ie similar to MUP]
- Four strength categories for beer (<6.5% to >8.5%) with minimum prices set between the equivalent of \$1.58 and \$2.48 per standard drink
- Two strength categories for wine, 2 for coolers and 3 for spirits

# Impacts on Consumption II

*Stockwell, Zhao et al, American J Public Health, 2012*

Consumption of alcoholic beverages in Saskatchewan  
before and after a major Minimum Price policy change



# Saskatchewan, 2008-2012

- A 10% increase in minimum prices significantly reduced consumption of beer by 10.1%, spirits by 5.9%, wine by 4.6%, and all beverages combined by **8.4%**
- Significantly greater reductions for government liquor stores where minimum prices most affected retail prices **and for beverages with most products affected**
- There was a significant **shift away from high to low strength** beers and wines
- Police reported **fewer incidents of public violence** at weekends
- **Increase in government revenue** from liquor and increased profits to wholesale suppliers – approx. \$40m per annum



# Informal reports of benefits

*"Higher prices for cheap booze cuts binge drinking, Sask. Finds"* -  
Saskatoon Star Phoenix July 5, 2010

*"Saskatchewan one of first jurisdictions in the world to implement  
across the board minimum pricing...linked to a formula  
accounting for the amount of pure alcohol in each product"*

*"The concept is to discourage excess consumption through binge  
drinking,"* - Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

*Police calls per month related to intoxication or disturbances  
halved* - local police inspector

**Do increases in the  
minimum alcohol prices  
lead to reduced alcohol-  
related harm?**

# Sheffield Model is supported but gives conservative estimates of health outcomes for British Columbia

**Comparative estimates of health and crime outcomes from an increase in the average Minimum Price in BC from CA\$1.15 to CA\$1.50/Standard Drink  
[Equivalent to £0.43p to £0.55p per UK Unit]**

	Immediate		Delayed	
Category of Alcohol Attributable Harm	Sheffield Model	CARBC Studies	Sheffield Model [10 years]	CARBC Studies [2 years]
<i>Deaths (N)</i>	39 ↓	100 ↓	56 ↓	276 ↓
<i>Hospital Admissions (N)</i>	244 ↓	1432 ↓	610 ↓	1893 ↓
<i>Crimes (N)</i>	1346 ↓	7600 ↓	n/a	n/a



# Some Conclusions

- **Most hypotheses regarding associations with alcohol consumption and related harm were confirmed**
- The underlying theory is likely correct and minimum pricing per standard drink is well targeted to heavy drinkers – and is a more feasible pricing policy
- **The Sheffield Model underestimates the health benefits of Minimum Unit Pricing for the UK**
- Replication studies in other jurisdictions are required

**See:** *Stockwell and Thomas (2013) Is alcohol too cheap in the UK? Institute for Alcohol Studies, London, UK, 24 April.*

**Visit:** [www.carbc.ca](http://www.carbc.ca) and [www.iac.uk.org](http://www.iac.uk.org) for copies of papers





Thank you!