

Webinar series: Alcohol policy in Canadian municipalities
Séries de webinaires : Politique sur l'alcool dans les municipalités canadiennes

Webinar 5: February 26, 2026

**Municipal alcohol policies and beyond: examples and
experiences in British Columbia**
**Politiques municipales en matière d'alcool et au-delà :
exemples et expériences en Colombie-Britannique**



**University
of Victoria**

Canadian Institute
for Substance
Use Research

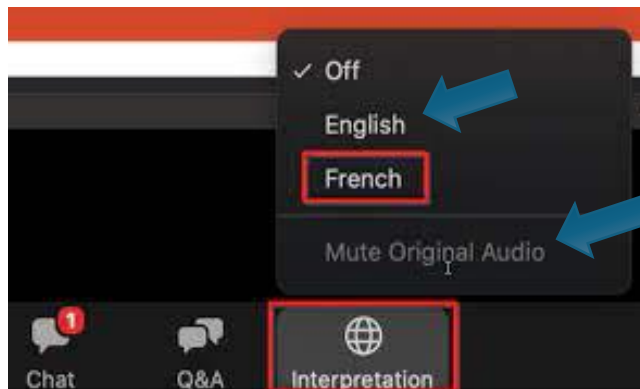
Institut canadien
de recherche sur
l'usage de substances

CA⁺PE
CANADIAN ALCOHOL
POLICY EVALUATION

Interprétation simultanée

Veuillez noter que l'événement sera en anglais / This event will be in English.

Une interprétation simultanée en français est disponible sauf pendant la période des questions / Simultaneous French interpretation is available except during the Q&A segment.



Land acknowledgement

As we gather today, we want to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional and ancestral territories of many Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island. We recognize the enduring presence, resilience, and sovereignty of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial.

We honor the diverse Indigenous Peoples and cultures across what is now called Canada, and we affirm our collective responsibility to learn about the histories of the lands we live and work on and to commit to ongoing reconciliation and respectful relationships.

We offer this land acknowledgement as just one step (of many) toward understanding, respect, learning, unlearning and healing on the path to reconciliation and reconcili-Action.

Adapted from Tamarack Institute

Acknowledgment of funding and support

This webinar series is an initiative of the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR) and the Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation Community of Practice (CAPE CoP) and is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Cette initiative de l'Institut canadien de recherche sur l'usage de substances (CISUR) et de la Communauté de pratique pour l'évaluation des politiques canadiennes en matière d'alcool (CdP de CAPE) est soutenue en partie par le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines.

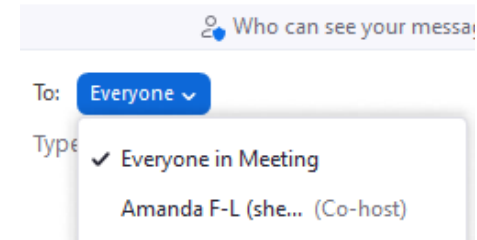
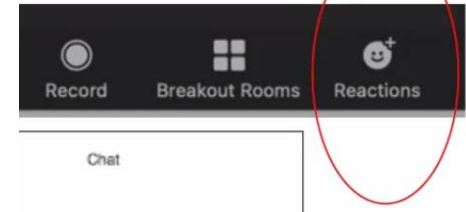
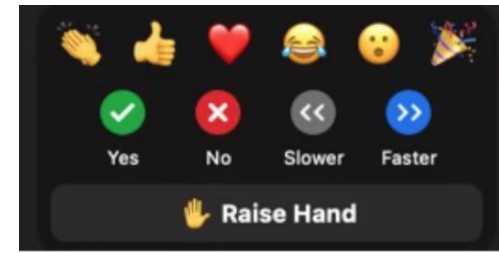
The views and opinions expressed as part of this presentation are those of the presenters and do not necessarily represent those of our funders or other organizations acknowledged.

Today's session

- This webinar includes a presentation, moderated panel and Q&A, 75mins total.
- The presentation component will be recorded, not the Q&A.
Links to the recording and presentation slides will be sent via email.
- We invite your feedback about today's session.
A survey link will be shared at the end of the webinar and via email.
- To receive persons with lived/living experience honorariums, please email **capecopcoord@uvic.ca**

Q&A format

- Use the Q&A tool to submit a question at any time. You can choose to submit anonymously.
- 'raise hand' during Q&A segment. The moderator may ask you to unmute to pose your question.
- Technical difficulties?
Please message us in the chat or 'Ask for Help'



Presenters & Panelists

Tim Naimi, Director, Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research

Tom Stere, Elected Councillor, District of Tofino

Ruth Hellerud-Brown, Project Leader, Legal Substances, Fraser Health

Gwenyth Dwyn, Community Health Specialist, Legal Substances, Fraser Health

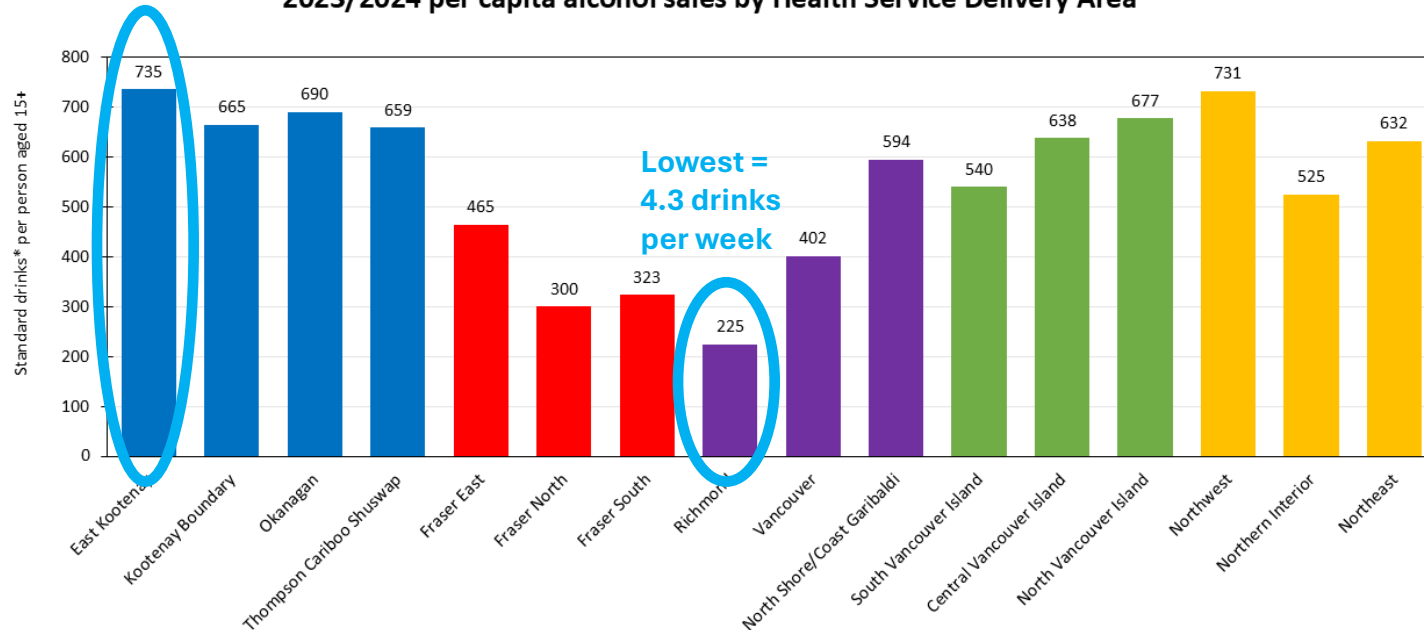
Lyndsay MacKenzie, Senior Policy Lead, Island Health

Faye Missar, Community Health Promoter, Alberni-Clayoquot Region, Island Health

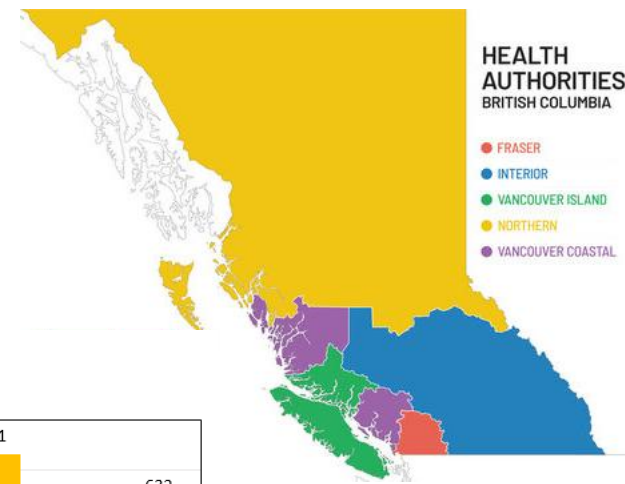
Alcohol in BC

Highest =
14.1 drinks
per week

2023/2024 per capita alcohol sales by Health Service Delivery Area



*1 standard drink = 17.05mL of pure ethanol, or a 341mL (12oz) serving of a 5% beer, cider or cooler; 142mL (5oz) serving of 12% wine; or 43mL (1.5oz) serving of 40% spirits



Alcohol Deficit

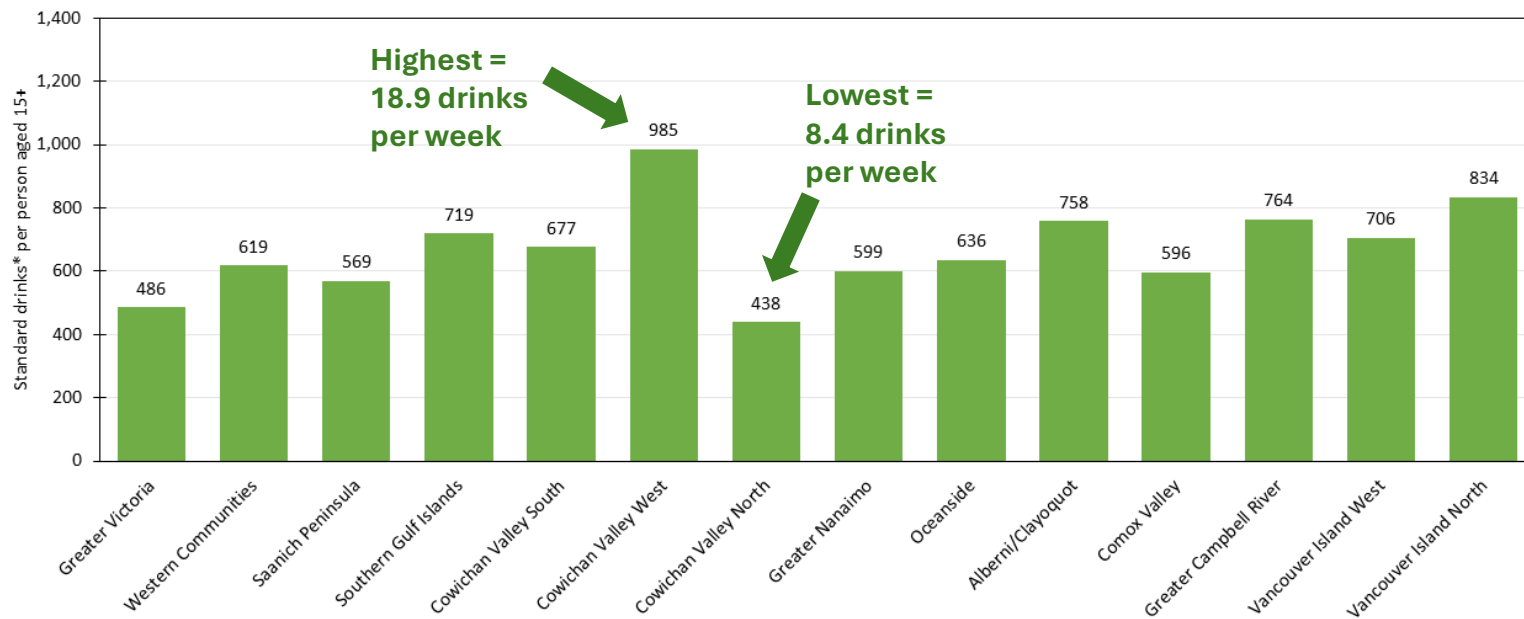
+ \$2.043B alcohol revenues

- \$2.81B alcohol harm costs

= **-\$768M** total alcohol deficit
which equates to **-\$0.33** per standard drink sold (2020/21^{2,3})

Alcohol in BC

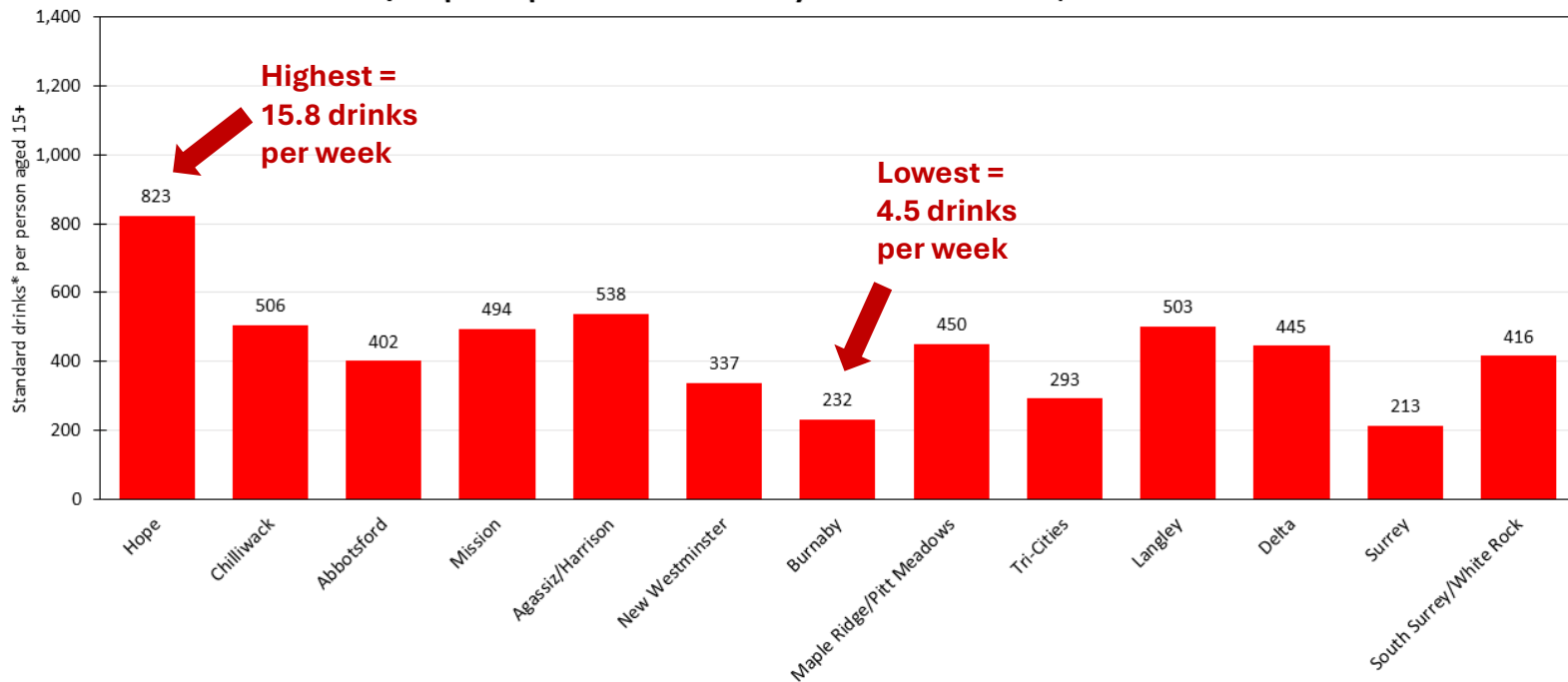
2023/24 per capita alcohol sales by Local Health Area, Island Health



*1 standard drink = 17.05mL of pure ethanol, or a 341mL (12oz) serving of a 5% beer, cider or cooler;
142mL (5oz) serving of 12% wine; or 43mL (1.5oz) serving of 40% spirits

Alcohol in BC

2023/24 per capita alcohol sales by Local Health Area, Fraser Health



*1 standard drink = 17.05mL of pure ethanol, or a 341mL (12oz) serving of a 5% beer, cider or cooler;
142mL (5oz) serving of 12% wine; or 43mL (1.5oz) serving of 40% spirits

Local government in BC

- 161 municipalities, 27 regional districts; 5 regional health authorities; 202 First Nations governments.
- The regional districts are unique in Canada. They act as a "federation" of both incorporated municipalities and unincorporated rural electoral areas.
- Municipal councillors often serve on their local municipal council and also sit as a director on the regional district board. This system ensures that municipal governments play a direct role in regional service provision and finance.
- Municipalities are governed by the [Community Charter](#) and the [Local Government Act](#). Vancouver is governed by the [Vancouver Charter](#).

Alcohol policy at local level in BC



Source: Alcohol Control Policies for Local Government, Island Health (2025)

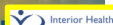
Examples:

- District of Tofino - [Municipal Alcohol Policy](#)
- Resort Municipality of Whistler - [Municipal Liquor Licensing Policy](#)
- City of Prince George - [Liquor and Cannabis Licensing Policy](#)
- District of Kitimat - [Municipal Alcohol Policy](#)

Alcohol policy resources in BC



A LOCAL GOVERNMENT GUIDE TO CREATING MUNICIPAL ALCOHOL POLICY



WHAT CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DO?

Through healthy public policies and partnerships, it is possible to both support the economic and social benefits of alcohol, and reduce its harm. Here are some possible actions that local governments can take:

1 REGULATE ALCOHOL AT PUBLIC SPACES & EVENTS

- Create a Municipal Alcohol Policy (MAP) to regulate, manage and evaluate alcohol consumption on municipally owned properties.
- Provide incentives to alcohol-free event organizers, like lower booking fees and priority dates.
- If alcohol is permitted at an event:
 - Provide alcohol-free spaces.
 - Enclose licensed areas and ensure they are not accessible to minors.
 - Establish clear consequences for non-compliance, like fines and loss of hosting or renting privileges.

Community example:
City of Toronto
The City of Toronto prohibits big beers (over 5.6%) on municipally owned property. The policy also requires that at least one-third of alcohol volume at events must be of low alcohol content.

When alcohol is served at events, consider following the Government of BC's Public Health Guidelines on Motor Planned Events Fact Sheet.

EXPLORE LAND USE PLANNING OPTIONS

- Explore zoning options related to the location and density of alcohol retail locations:
 - Develop community policies that clearly establish where licensed alcohol establishments can be located.
 - Consider minimum separation distances between outlets that sell alcohol and sensitive land use areas, such as schools, daycares, treatment centers, parks and beaches.
- Invest in transit options, including pedestrian walkways, especially close to locations that serve alcohol.



Alcohol retail density contributes to overconsumption

Community example:
City of Edmonton
The City of Edmonton limits the density of alcohol establishments and regulates distance between alcohol environments by using its zoning bylaws.



Healthy Public Policy
Population & Public Health

Alcohol Control Policies for Local Government



Building Healthier Communities

Local governments play a vital role in building healthy, vibrant communities by ensuring public spaces are welcoming and supportive for all. Thoughtful policies and regulations to health and well-being help to create the conditions for everyone to thrive¹.

Alcohol is a commonly consumed psychoactive substance in Canada and contributes to a range of health and social harms², from immediate impacts like poor sleep, hangovers, injuries, to long-term risks like cancers and liver and heart disease. Alcohol also causes second-hand harms, including violence, reduced performance at work or school and relationships and families³. These harms increase as alcohol use increases within communities.



Communities thrive when public spaces and social life are shaped by people and experiences. Over time, deregulation and widespread marketing have made alcohol more accessible. This makes it harder for people who are trying to cut back and avoid alcohol's negative effects. Local policies that reduce retailer density, limit advertising alcohol's role in community events can shift social norms and reduce consumption⁴. governments enact alcohol control policies, they drive meaningful change – supporting communities to be more healthy, connected and resilient.



Policy Options: Gaps and Opportunities

Local action is needed to protect community health. Federal and provincial policies can increase alcohol availability. In British Columbia, this includes policies regarding density to sensitive locations, retail hours, delivery services and availability at events. They contribute to the normalization of alcohol use in daily life and public spaces, encourage consumption more. By adopting policies that shift social norms and limit alcohol availability, governments can close policy gaps, strengthen regulations and inspire broader change.



Evidence-based, public health considerations for local governments to support healthy, vibrant communities

PURPOSE

This guide is designed to provide an evidence-based, public-health perspective to support local government decision-making around unsupervised public alcohol consumption on municipal properties such as parks, beaches, and city plazas. It outlines key areas for consideration with a focus on health equity and creating and maintaining healthy, vibrant, and accessible outdoor community spaces.

Specifically, this resource provides:

- Introduction to the issue of unsupervised alcohol consumption on public properties in BC (**P2**)
- Current context of alcohol consumption and related harms and costs in BC (**P2**)
- Health-equity considerations and public health risks of unsupervised alcohol consumption on public property (**P3**)
- Related operational impact, and monitoring, enforcement, and liability considerations for municipalities (**P5**)
- Guidance on risk mitigation and harm reduction strategies for public properties where unsupervised alcohol is or may be permitted (**P6**)

For more detailed information on this topic, please refer to the full version of this resource on the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR) website: www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur

SUMMARY OF GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

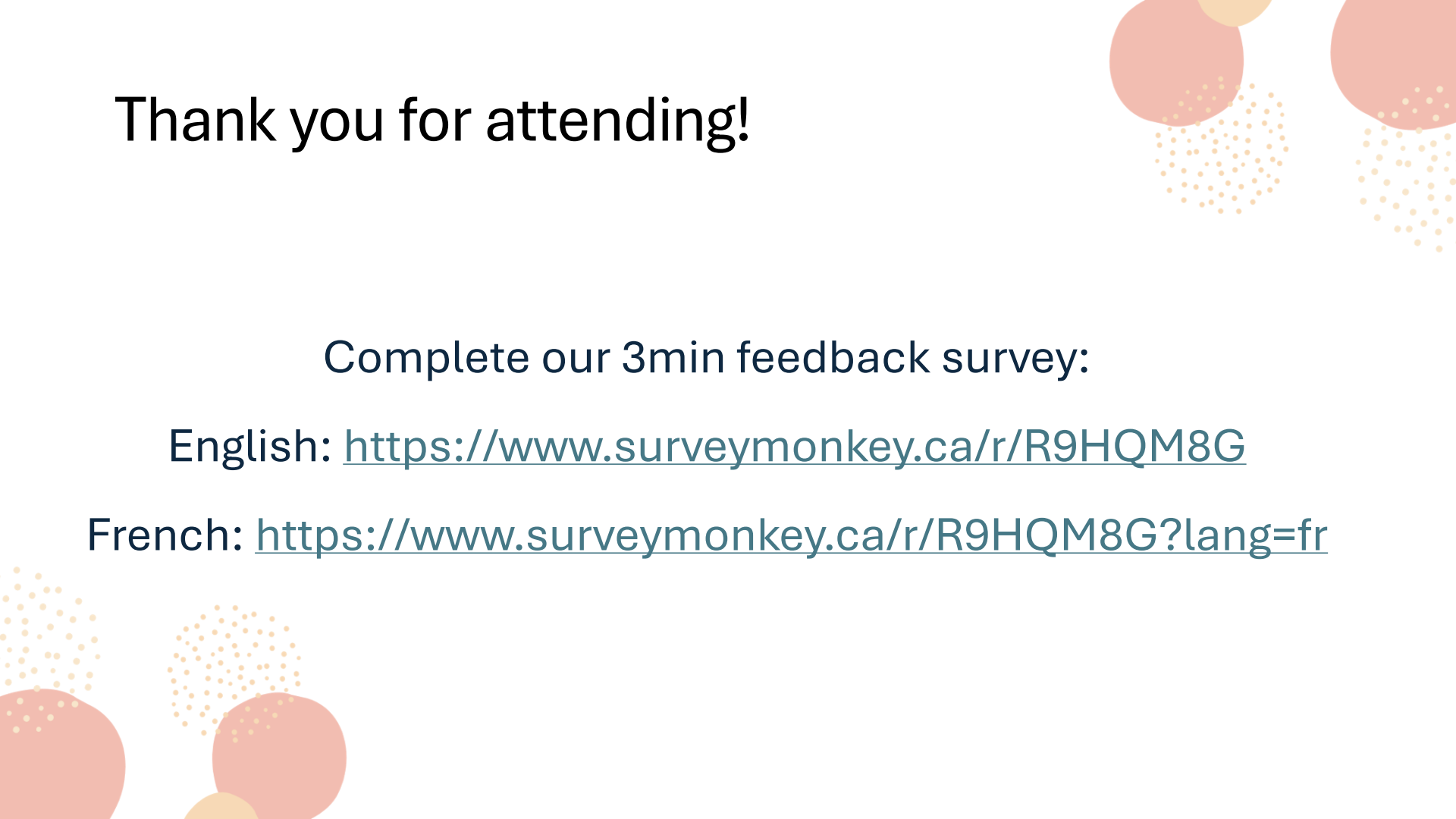
Unlike licensed establishments such as restaurants and pubs, which have regulated oversight of alcohol consumed on premises, unsupervised alcohol consumption on public properties carries a unique set of public health and safety risks. On balance, the evidence suggests that such policy changes will increase harms within communities and should therefore not be implemented. If local governments choose to proceed, this policy change warrants careful consideration and ongoing review. The guidance below offers strategies for mitigating the associated increase in alcohol-related harms. Specifically, local governments are encouraged to:

Panel discussion



Q&A





Thank you for attending!

Complete our 3min feedback survey:

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/R9HQM8G>

French: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/R9HQM8G?lang=fr>