



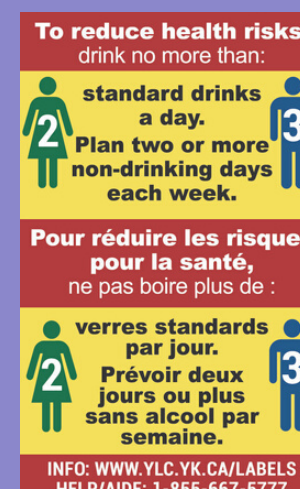
# ALCOHOL INDUSTRY INTERFERENCE WITH WARNING LABEL RESEARCH



LEGAL CONTEXT AND MEDIA PORTRAYALS

## WHAT HAPPENED?

The Northern Territories Alcohol Labels Study evaluated new rotating colourful warning labels placed on alcohol containers in a government liquor store in Whitehorse, Yukon. Three waves of surveys were conducted in Whitehorse, and Yellowknife served as the comparison site. Shortly after the launch of the new labels, Canadian alcohol industry lobby groups interfered with the study, making claims about the validity of the study and the label's messages.



## WHAT DID THE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY CLAIM?

### THEY DENIED ALCOHOL CAUSED CANCER.

The most frequent industry strategy was to deny or downplay the link between alcohol and cancer in media coverage. They also claimed the Yukon government could be held liable for claiming that alcohol use can cause cancer.



### THEY QUESTIONED THE LABELS' LEGALITY.

The alcohol industry questioned the government's legal authority to place the warning labels on containers in both the media and correspondence, ultimately led to the study being halted for three months and the removal of the cancer label.



## WERE THESE CLAIMS TRUE?

### OUR LEGAL ANALYSIS SAYS NO.

#### GOVERNMENTS HAVE A DUTY TO WARN ABOUT CANCER.

Given that alcohol has been categorized by the WHO as a Class 1 carcinogen since the 1980s, governments that sell alcohol should be warning consumers about the potential risk associated with consuming it, as is done on tobacco labels.



#### THE GOVERNMENT HAD THE RIGHT TO PUT THE LABELS ON.

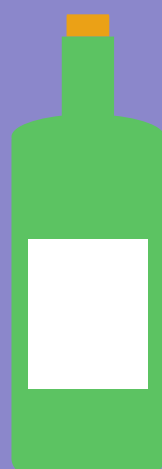
A previous legal analysis had established provincial rights to affix aftermarket warning labels to alcohol containers, and the Yukon Act gives the territorial government additional powers regarding "intoxicants".

## DID THE INTERFERENCE WORK?

### SORT OF...

#### THE CANCER WARNING LABELS WERE REMOVED.

After industry pushback, the study was paused and eventually resumed without the cancer warning label. Study protocols were altered and the intervention period was shortened.



#### MOST MEDIA COVERAGE SUPPORTED THE LABELS.

The small study became a national and international media story, resulting in millions of people seeing the labels. 68% of media articles about the Yukon study were supportive of alcohol warning labels with a cancer message.



## References

Vallance et al., 2020. News media and the influence of the alcohol industry: an analysis of media coverage of alcohol warning labels with a cancer message in Canada and Ireland, *JSAD* / Stockwell et al., 2020. Cancer warning labels on alcohol containers: A consumer's right to know, a government's responsibility to inform, and an industry's power to thwart, *JSAD*

[alcohollabels.cisur.ca](http://alcohollabels.cisur.ca)