

Backgrounder – Legally Sourced Liquor Pledge Program

What is the Legally Sourced Liquor Pledge Program?

The Legally Sourced Liquor Pledge Program is a new initiative from the Edmonton Police Foundation. The Program is part of a program that was won by the Social Innovation Institute in a global competition hosted by the Edmonton Police Foundation and Alcanna to reduce theft from liquor stores in Edmonton. This initiative is in response to a sharp increase in thefts from liquor stores in Edmonton and across the province. The stolen liquor is often used as a street-level currency, and at times then sold to other establishments that sell or serve alcohol at a much lower price than legitimate suppliers can offer. Therefore, the program asks business owners to make a visible public commitment to buying from legal sources only. Businesses who take the pledge will receive a badge to display on their premises, demonstrating to customers the business is committed to legal sourcing.

For more information, please visit <https://legallysourced.com/>

Why is liquor theft a big deal in Edmonton?

In Edmonton and other parts of Alberta, a trend has emerged of organized crime groups coordinating the theft of liquor which is often used as a street-level currency, and at times then sold to other establishments that sell or serve alcohol at a much lower price than legitimate suppliers can offer. Liquor theft has dramatically increased over the years. In 2019, 9,595 thefts were reported in liquor stores across Edmonton – more than three times as many as there were in 2018. This trend is being driven by organized crime groups. Street-level gangs in Edmonton are coordinating frequent thefts of large amounts of alcohol (spirits in particular) during large liquor store' business hours. These groups are taking advantage of policies designed to protect employee safety, which prevent liquor store employees from physically intervening to stop a theft.

Why is liquor being stolen?

In the case of large-scale theft from liquor stores, the liquor is rarely being stolen for personal consumption. Instead, the stolen product is often sold to other establishments that sell or serve alcohol, at a much lower price than legitimate suppliers can offer. These thefts decreased sharply when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the temporary closure of bars and restaurants and began to rise again when the closures were lifted.

The proceeds from selling stolen liquor to bars and restaurants are often used to finance the activities of the criminal organizations that are driving the thefts. A significant amount of money has been funneled into organized crime in Edmonton this way. Similar trends have also been observed in other parts of Canada and are becoming an issue across the country.

What is the Liquor Theft Activation?

To effectively demonstrate the importance of the Legally Sourced Liquor Pledge Program we are setting up a public activation. The Activation Event will be set up in the Windermere location of Wine and Beyond on Saturday, February 27, 2021 from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. When customers open the cooler door, they will be surprised to see a real-life scene (played out by actors) showing black market activity. In addition to the scene, there will be decals posted around the store with detail about the issue.

The activation is intended to surprise the audience with glimpses of the harsh societal impact liquor theft is having in Edmonton, and start a conversation about how far reaching that impact truly is.

Who is the activation intended for?

In short, everyone. Edmonton police are actively working on solving this problem, but a concerted effort from the whole community is more effective than law enforcement acting alone. Organized crime affects all of us, directly or indirectly, and the public can have an impact by rallying around this issue.

Everyone can do their part to limit the growth of organized crime by learning about this issue, spreading awareness and starting conversations about it.

What is the Social Innovation Institute?

The MacEwan University Social Innovation Institute (SII) engages in work to create social change and supports others to do the same. SII connects people who have big ideas with the resources they need to bring that idea to life. Such resources include technical resources, workshops and, most importantly, like-minded people. The institute specifically focuses on developing ideas that promote social innovation and social enterprise.

What is the Edmonton Police Foundation?

The Edmonton Police Foundation raises funds to advance excellence and transform community policing in support of our Edmonton Police Service. They are committed to helping position Edmonton as the safest city in Canada and the EPS as a recognized leader in community policing. The Foundation is proud to promote innovative projects and programs which strengthen the relationship between the police and the community.

Is anyone available to be interviewed about the Liquor Theft Activation or Badge Program?

Yes. We would be happy to arrange media interviews. To arrange an interview with an EPF, Alcanna or Social Innovation Institute spokesperson about the Liquor Theft Activation or Badge Program, please contact:

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