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**MANITOBA REACHES OUT TO INDUSTRY, EXPERTS TO CREATE NEW ALCOHOL HARM
REDUCTION STRATEGY**

Province Encouraging Responsible Drinking: Rondeau

Manitoba will work with the public, the hospitality industry and public health experts to develop a comprehensive strategy to encourage responsible alcohol consumption and reduce alcohol abuse, Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs Minister Jim Rondeau announced today.

“For many Manitobans, a drink in the backyard or at the lake is a chance to unwind and most do that responsibly, but there are situations where excessive alcohol can lead to serious health and safety issues,” said Rondeau. “We’re bringing families, industry and experts together to have their say and create a plan that will ensure Manitobans can enjoy a drink responsibly and ensure that more supports are in place for those that need them.”

A committee chaired by chief provincial public health officer Dr. Michael Routledge, including provincial and external stakeholders, will develop the strategy. Representatives from government, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), the Manitoba Hotel Association and the Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association will sit on the committee.

“The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse is pleased to contribute to this important work in reducing the harms associated with alcohol abuse,” said Michel Perron, chief executive officer, CCSA. “We commend Minister Rondeau and the Government of Manitoba for their commitment to this issue and for having all key sectors at the table to develop a comprehensive provincial plan. As co-lead of the National Alcohol Strategy, CCSA looks forward to sharing its experiences, best practices and knowledge of effective alcohol practices across Canada.”

A number of other organizations will provide the committee with advice and expertise including Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Project, addictions service agencies, and cultural and community representatives.

The minister said the strategy will focus on reducing harm from alcohol use while encouraging moderation, public health and safety. The development phase will include:

- a review of current policies and initiatives, and
- the creation of recommendations to further strengthen how the province addresses problems related to alcohol use.

Rondeau noted the strategy will build on local, national and international work to address concerns related to alcohol use including:

- the introduction of a global alcohol strategy by the World Health Organization in 2010;
- work by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and the federal government on the development of a national alcohol strategy;
- the introduction of new legislation in Manitoba to modernize liquor laws by offering new opportunities for the industry, balanced with a renewed commitment to public safety, social responsibility and community input;
- stronger impaired driving, under-age drinking and over-serving policies; and
- participation from many government departments to ensure full inclusion of the message of moderation.

Meetings with stakeholders and committee meetings will begin this fall, Rondeau said.