

Booze is the biggest problem

Last week a parliamentary committee announced alcohol abuse - not illicit drug use - was the single greatest addiction problem in Canada.

That came as no surprise to Burt Mason, a director of the Problem Drinker's Program at the Mental Health Centre in Penetanguishene.

"We've been saying that for years," he says. "Since alcohol has always been the most socially acceptable drug it has always contained the greatest potential for abuse."

The parliamentary committee report made a few suggestions on how the alcohol problem might be managed.

It recommended liquor bottles have clearly marked warnings on their labels, much like the messages from Health and Welfare Canada on a package of cigarettes.

There was also the suggestion that distillers put 14 per cent of their profits into advertising campaigns for responsible drinking.

Mason is unimpressed with that last suggestion.

"I think it's a case of passing the buck. They're asking the distillers to pick up the cost, yet look at what the government gets out of it. How much profit does the distiller get from a bottle of spirits? Maybe \$2; the rest of it is tax."

Mason says he has "mix-

ed feelings" about the suggestion that warnings be placed on the bottles.

What he does think will work is education.

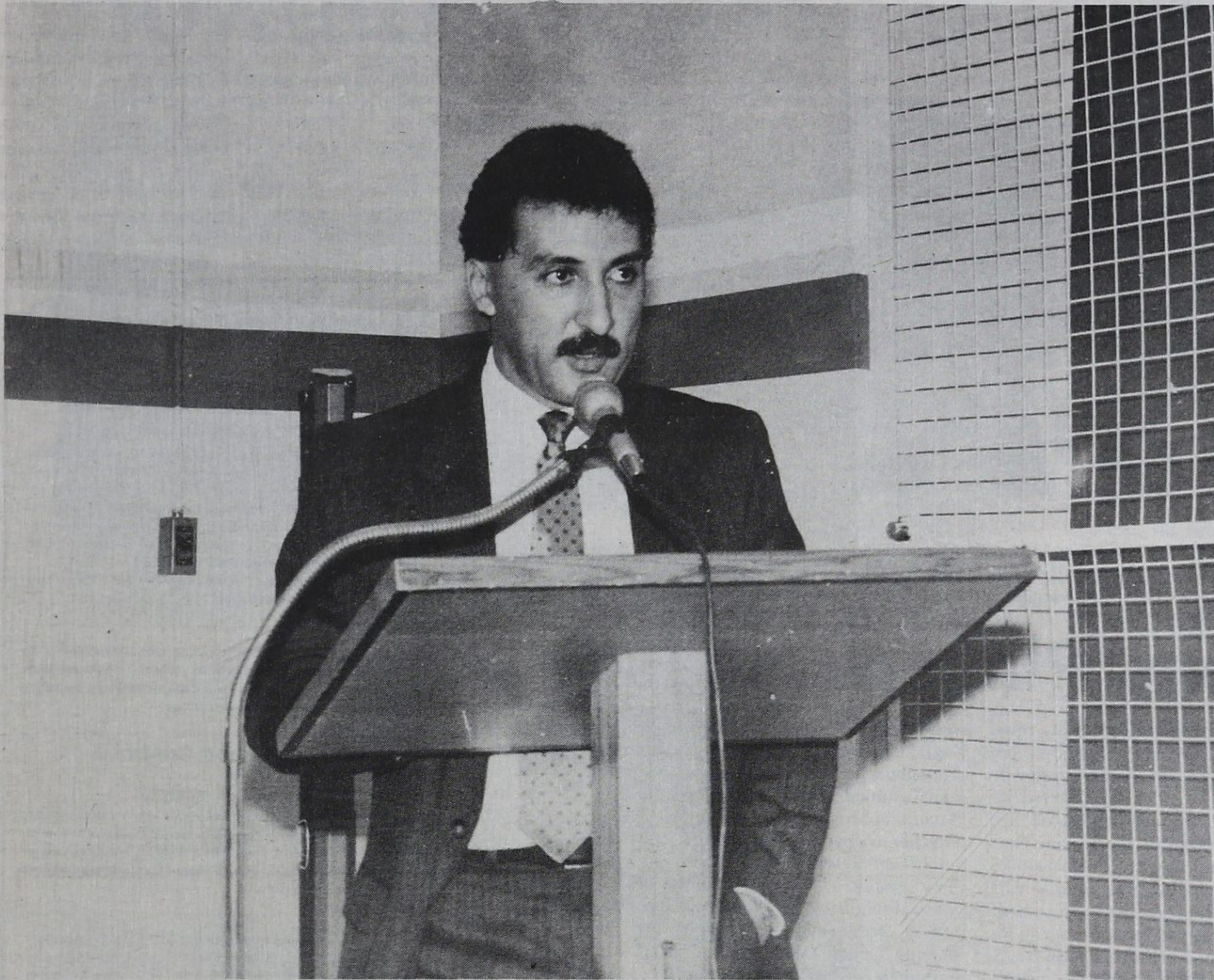
"If you compare drinking to smoking, then what happened to the attitudes surrounding smoking is happening to those around drinking. Few people liked

to question smoking at one time, now virtually everyone does."

Mason suggests "you can't measure education over a few weeks."

But attitudes toward drinking may have been forced to change. As it is now, you either drink or drive; you can't do both. Most people are choosing the latter option.

"There's no question that the tougher impaired driving laws are affecting how much we drink and when we drink. At one time, the possibility of getting caught for drunk driving was almost nonexistent. All that changed with the RIDE Program and society's general anger towards impaired drivers," Mason said.



Preparing us for change

George Kytayko, the Administrator of the Mental Health Centre in Penetang, opens a

meeting last Wednesday. The meeting came up with a series of recommendations for the

reorganization of the centre. These will be sent to the Minister of Health.

Police officer assaulted

A Port McNicoll man has been sentenced to 30 days in jail for assaulting a police officer.

Patrick Smith, 23, pleaded guilty to hitting Constable Edward Medved on March 28, 1987.

Crown Attorney Elizabeth Earle-Renton said that Smith "made numerous attempts to prevent the officers from doing their duty. Medved was then punched in the lower right jaw and neck area and kicked in the lower left leg.

Smith attacked Medved from behind.

The defence lawyer tried to explain Smith's activity. J. Lunnie said that Smith had been drinking that night. As he walked down the sidewalk, he chanced to see a cousin of his being arrested.

Lunnie went on to say that Smith believed his

cousin, who has difficulty breathing, was being restrained with too much force.

"Obviously that's not a legal excuse but it is perhaps an explanation," Lunnie said.

The case obviously angered the visiting Judge. Shaking his head, he said, "I don't know what it is about this area up here, but I've heard more police assaults in the past few days than I have in six months."

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