

Knowing where to drink can keep you out of court

Before drinking alcohol outside a home or licensed establishment, Ontario residents should be sure they understand the liquor laws involved.

For example, it's legal to drink at a private backyard barbecue, but not at a picnic in a public park, unless a special occasion permit has been issued.

Although better informed about the dangers and legal risks of impaired driving, many consumers are still unfamiliar with other alcohol-related laws and can make costly mistakes, says Len Griffiths of the Ontario Liquor Licence Board (LLBO).

"For instance, most people know it's illegal to drink in a car, but are surprised to find out it's even an offence to carry an open bottle within reach," Griffiths says.

The Liquor Licence Act states open bottles transported in motor vehicles must be stored out of reach of the driver and passengers. As the term "out of reach" is open to interpretation, use common sense and err on the side of caution, advises Griffiths.

"It's better to be safe, in case the police stop you," he says. "Put it in the trunk or in locked luggage: somewhere it's not going to rouse suspicions."

The Licence Act is quite specific about the locations where consumption is permitted. Outside of establishments licensed by the LLBO, the only place you can legally drink is in and around a residence.

In addition to actual houses, a "residence" can be a tent, trailer, motor home, houseboat, or any other dwelling equipped in use for overnight stays.

"So, as long as the place where

you are camping doesn't have any special bans on alcohol, it is legal to drink in and around your tent, trailer or whatever you are using as a dwelling," Griffiths says. "Just don't go wandering down the trail with a drink in your hand. It's only legal in the immediate area around your residence."

The usual fine for illegal transport or consumption of alcohol in a public place, is \$53.

There's a bit of a twist for boaters, says Gerry Conroy of the Ontario office of the Attorney General.

Boats must be moored for the night

According to Conroy, even a boat equipped for sleeping and food preparation is only considered a residence when it is moored for the night.

"You can't just pull over to the side, throw the anchor out and have a beer," says Staff Sergeant Larry Smith of the OPP.

It is also illegal to drink in public view on boats, even those qualifying as "residences".

When not docked for the night, all boats become vehicles, subject to the same alcohol-related laws applying to cars.

Whether in a car, boat, or any other vehicle, passengers caught drinking or with easy access to alcohol, would be subject to the standard \$53 fine.

If impaired, the driver would face one of three charges, Conroy says. These include "impaired," "failure to blow" (take a breathalyser test) and "blowing over 80 mg per cent" (having more than 80 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood).

The penalties are the same for all three charges.

"A lot of people think "blowing over" is all there is...but you don't even have to be asked to take a breathalyser test to get charged with impaired," Conroy says.

The minimum penalty for a first offence is a fine of \$300, a one-year suspension of driving privileges and a criminal record. Boaters would be prohibited from operating boats for a year, although their motor vehicle driving licences would be unaffected.

Two-time offenders get at least 14 days in jail and a two-year suspension. This applies even if one incident involved a boat and the other a car. A third offence in a five year period carries a minimum penalty of 90 days in jail and a three-year licence suspension.

Convictions for impaired driving causing bodily injury can put offenders in jail for as much as 10 years. Add another four years to that for "impaired driving causing death."

In addition to the tough penalties, drivers convicted on impaired charges have to deal with the stigma and difficulties associated with having a criminal record. This can affect employment and immigration opportunities.

"And one of the new consequences we are seeing...is that if you are charged and convicted of impaired driving, you can expect to have your insurance go up to \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year, no matter how old you are or how good your past driving record was - if you can find an insurance company that will take you," Conroy says.

Low crime rate

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"Many small communities already have a neighborhood watch and don't realize it," commented McEwen.

Neighborhood

Watch Philosophy

"They have this philosophy working - it's something that just happened."

"In larger centres, Neighborhood Watches usually spring up when problems arise, but you don't have one here."

He said many neighbors give keys to close friends or relatives when they leave town, have someone check the house and cut the lawn, and take notice when a strange car is in the neighborhood.

These are all aspects of the Neighborhood Watch program that seem to come naturally to a smaller community.

McEwen noted criminals have

to have the opportunity before they can commit a crime.

After serving with the Sault Ste. Marie Police Force for 34 years, ten of those as chief of police, McEwen was approached by the Policing Services Division to see if he would be interested in taking on his current position.

He was, and has been serving in that capacity for the past three years. Still living in Sault Ste. Marie, he inspects municipal police forces across Northern Ontario, except for Sault Ste. Marie for as he puts it, "obvious reasons."

His job also involves investigating policing problems, whether reported by citizens or police members themselves, but he said arbitration and internal policing has reduced the number of this type of occurrence. Last year, he investigated three or four of these types of problems in all of Northern Ontario.

Loss of pet stirs emotions

By Alice Scott

The loss of a pet through death can cause the same amount of sorrow that you would feel at the loss of a member of your family.

The emotional stages of mourning are the identical. But they can be suppressed, because people are afraid to express their emotions due to the fact that friends and family members may not be sensitive to their sense of loss.

Veterinarians and psychologists now realize that the loss of a pet can have a drastic impact on the pet owner's life.

Veterinarians are receiving training on how to help people cope and accept their pet's death.

Another problem for pet own-

ers is facing the expected and inevitable death of their pets and having to give permission for their pet to be euthanized.

Your vet can help you with your decision and give you the emotional support and understanding that you will need.

The following tips can help you overcome the sorrow and grief that naturally occurs when a beloved companion dies;

1. Understand that you have a right to grieve. You have lost a loyal and loved friend and a member of your family.

2. Anger and guilt are natural but regressive and neither emotion will help you overcome your loss. Focus on the grief and not blaming yourself or others.

3. Allow yourself to go through the stages of reaction to death; denial, anger, depression and acceptance.

4. Put your pets belongings out of sight, then gradually bring the items out again.

5. When the sorrow becomes overwhelming focus on the good memories to distract yourself.

6. Talk to a friend or family member who will understand your grief.

7. Wait till you have gone through the stages of grief before getting another pet.

With time, your grief will pass and you'll be able to think of your pet with fond memories.

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