

# Lowering the drinking age in saskatchewan

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Introduction Alcoholism by teenagers is a huge problem that has affected the nation for many years. The question is whether lowering the drinking age help or worsen the situation. Saskatchewan party members passed a resolution to lower the drinking age from 19 to 18. This move revived a lot of support from SaskParty youth. Nonetheless, the Premier Brad Wall stated that even though he takes the resolutions seriously, he will have to consult broadly before any changes are made. Some of the quarters that he will consult include Mother Against Drunk Driving, Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA), Saskatchewan Government Insurance, among other law enforcement agencies.

If the resolution succeeds, Saskatchewan will be the fourth province after Manitoba, Albertan and Quebec to have 18 as the minimum drinking age (NIH & NIDA, 2012). This write-up seeks to evaluate the whole idea by considering what has happened in other countries such as the US. The paper will discuss both the pros and cons before giving recommendations on the best step forward. Discussion The debate on identifying the optimum legal drinking age is bound to continue for a long time to come. It involves so many issues including; responsibility, freedoms, politics, parental rights, and religion among others.

Similarly, there are advantages and disadvantages to this debate. Moreover, supporters of either side of the debate seem to be equipped with statistics to back up their argument. Low drinking age in Europe has not resulted to drinking problems Archer (2012) argues that many European countries have allowed their youth to start drinking at a young age. However, this has not caused any drinking problems because the youth can be monitored. He

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argues most people start drinking at 18. Therefore, whether there is a law or not, somehow most young people will start drinking once they clock 18 years.

This calls for putting in place mechanisms to allow them to drink in safe places such as bars where they can be guided and monitored by the older generation. However, the Minister for Liquor and Gaming, Mrs. Donna Harpauer argued that Saskatchewan should not approve the resolution just because other countries have done so. According to Keller, Frye, Bauerle & Turner (2009), there has been a considerable drop in the drunk driving and underage drinking incidences in the US since the passing of the National Drinking Age Act in 1984. However, those in support of a low drinking age argue that the drop in drinking related incidences is a result of so many other factors other than the higher drinking age. Some of these factors include increased alcohol education, use of seatbelts, safer automobiles, and designated driving programs.

The moment an individual knows that safety belts save lives, he will always ensure that he fastens the safety belts whether driving under the influence of alcohol or not. As a result, most people have escaped unhurt from road accidents (Archer, 2012). Similarly, as technology improves, new vehicles become more sophisticated and safer than the older vehicles. For instance, some vehicles have more than one airbag that safeguard passengers in case of accidents. How comes teens are old enough to join the military but young to drink The moment an individual turns 18, there are various responsibilities that he becomes eligible to.

Examples include voting, marrying, or joining the military. All these are activities that are meant to show that an individual is responsible and mature. Therefore, those in support of lowering the age argue that if an individual can be allowed to do all these, then nothing should stop him from consuming alcohol (Archer, 2012). However, LaBrie, Pedersen, Earleywine, & Olsen (2006) argues that most of these activities are meant to improve the livelihood of the teens. For instance, in the military, professionals guide the teens.

They are also trained on their mental and physical stability. On the contrary, alcohol affects the brain's thinking and could affect the decision they make. There is a reason why people are supposed to be sober or free from alcohol when signing the marriage certificates or job contracts. No parent who can deny his child something that adds value to his life. Therefore, the decision to oppose lowering the age is for the good of the children.

Most teens are drinking already Although there is a law on the minimum drinking age, this is just but a law on paper. Students in colleges are always drinking in parties, in their hostels or even in their houses when the parents are out of town. This is a clear indication that drinking is rampant among the teens (LaBrie, Pedersen, Earleywine, & Olsen, 2006). Critics argue that this has been brought about by the higher minimum drinking age. Teenagers and minors are forced to hide and drink so much liquor in a short period. Since they drink in private, there are no adults to moderate their alcohol consumption and model appropriate drinking behavior.

On the other hand, those opposed to lowering the age argue that it will lead to a rise in immoral behavior. They argue that even though youths are drinking anyway, they consume once in a while. But if they are permitted to drink, the number of those drinking would increase and more driving accidents will occur. Therefore, Archer (2012) believes that the current law has helped save lives that would otherwise have been lost when the drinking age was 18. This has prevented most youths from accessing liquor. Keller, Frye, Bauerle & Turner (2009) believe in the 'forbidden fruit theory'.

He argues that since liquor is prohibited, the youth indulge in alcohol consumption as a way of rebelling the authority. Teenage age is that point in life when people are always experimenting with various things in life. This is an age when teenagers want to be rebels. When a teenager consumes alcohol when the law does not allow him to, he feels some sense of satisfaction and achievement. This is the reason why although the legal age is 19, children aged 18 and younger drink alcohol in hidden places where their parents or teachers cannot find out.

They also consider drinking as a sign of adulthood and therefore want to show that they are mature. Therefore, critics argue that lowering the drinking age to 18 would reduce the number of teen indulging in alcoholism because it will no longer be a rebellious act. Is underage drinking such a big issue? Despite of all the statistics, the biggest question is what makes teens to start drinking at such an early age. One of the issues to be addressed in peer influence. Since their brains are still developing, sometimes teens want to do whatever their friends are doing to get a sense of belonging. Those who don't behave like their peers are seen to backward and 'uncool'.

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Sue (1999) asserts that although family lifestyle is a great determinant in a child's behavior, it is the media and their peers that influence them the most. Some ethnic groups like Chinese, Italian and Jews do not drink as much as per their culture. Therefore, the greatest question is why these groups don't drink as much as their counter parts in America or Canada. The main reason is that people in these countries are introduced to responsible drinking the moment they attain the minimum drinking age. Therefore, they grow up knowing that they have to drink responsibly and act responsibly when drunk.

In addition, inappropriate dinking is not tolerated in these countries. For instance, a study conducted in 2003 indicated that people living outside Saskatchewan are less likely to drink than the youth raised in the country. Is there a correlation between teenage drinking and health problems caused by drinking? Supporter of higher drinking age insist that studies have demonstrated that when an individual starts drinking at a young age, he/she will become more dependent on liquor at old age. In addition, physicians assert that alcohol is not good to younger individuals because it destroys their young brains. The human brain develops up to about twenty years.

An individual who starts drinking at a younger age is likely to have a less mature brain when he grows old or it might take longer to develop (Keller, Frye, Bauerle & Turner, 2009). The thinking of such an individual will be negatively affected and therefore he could end up performing poorly in not only academics but other fields of life. They also argue that 18 is an age where the teens are experiencing major physical and emotional changes. Their bodies change, their peers influence them, and most of they are in the <https://assignbuster.com/lowering-the-drinking-age-in-saskatchewan/>

process of deciding the kind of career they wish to follow. Therefore, it would be a wrong move to add pressure onto the teens with alcohol (Sue, 1999).

They face enough pressure already and alcohol would initiate them into taking drugs to ease their pressure. This can lead to other problems such as unplanned sex, violence, anxiety, teen pregnancies and depression. What is the correlation between drink driving and lower drinking ages? Those who support a lower drinking age argue that even though incidences of drinking and driving have reduced, there has been a major increase in the number of heavy drinkers and binge drivers to over 60% (Sue, 1999). According to Treuthart (2002), more than 21 million individuals aged below 34 years drive after drinking. If the minimum age is lowered, it is feared that the number would rise higher.

On the other hand, Wechsler & Nelson (2010) allege that 199 years is discriminating to teens below the age. The constitution gives every individual the right to live happily provided he does not infringe on other people's right. Therefore cutting out other people is an act against their constitutional right under the human rights section. However, those against lowering the age argue that most of these teens still live under the roofs of their parents and depend on them on most of issues. Therefore, it is unethical for a parent to spend so much money on tuition fees only for the son/daughter to drinking alcohol rather than concentrating in school.

They argue that there is time for everything. This is done in good faith because every parent want their children to grow up responsibly.

Recommendation As it has been demonstrated, there are pros and cons of

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lowering the drinking age. However, my opinion is that the law has done very little to prevent teenage drinking. Therefore, lowering the age would not make things better. Instead, the government should set aside resources to educate the teenagers on the need to avoid alcohol and concentrate on more important issues that include education.

Classes in responsible drinking could be very useful in tackling this problem. This can be included in the school curriculum in subjects such as chemistry, biology and the like. With proper education, the teens will be able to understand the disadvantages of starting to drink alcohol at a younger age. Therefore, the issue of lowering or raising the drinking age would not be a problem. In addition, they will be in a position to guide their peers to the right direction and encourage them to avoid alcohol at all cost (Treuthart, 2002)..

One best way of education is exposing the teen to victims of drinking and driving so that they can understand the disadvantages of drinking. From my experience of working in The Pump Roadhouse bar, I have witnessed many young kids aged 19 which is a legal drinking age consuming so much alcohol than they can stomach. Most of them end up fighting with their friends on very small differences while some pass out so early in the night. Am afraid that when the age is lowered to 18, I will witness more of such cases which I must admit are not good for a society. Older people understand that they have to drink responsibly and therefore often stop drinking when they feel that the liquor is taking a toll on them.



On the other hand, teenagers want to demonstrate to their friends that they are strong and can consume more alcohol. Therefore, to them, it is a matter of competition and appearing to be stronger. This is an indication that teens do not have the maturity to drink responsibly. In addition, lowering the drinking age would tell every youth that it is right to drink at a very young age when in real sense this should not be the case. Even for those above 19, drinking should not be a matter of life and death. Instead, it should be a chance for someone to relax and catch up with friends.

Creating a fuss out of the whole issues would make it seem like people cannot live without liquor. While there are parents who go out drinking with their children, most parents do not recommend their children to drink. 18 is a very tender age where teens need to be guided on the best choices in life because any wrong moves at this age would negatively affected their entire lives. For instance, teenage pregnancy is not an issue that we any society would proudly embrace. This is a young age when a teen is not able to take care of a child of family. There should be a difference between parents and their children.

Imagine a child walking into the house drunk while his father opens the door. This is not the kind of society we would want to create. At 18, the most important issue for a teen should be education. The issue of alcohol consumption should not even cross their mind. Lowering the age would be encouraging them to indulge in liquor. Their brain is still developing and parents need to nature them into better adults.

It will be difficult for them to concentrate in class with hangovers. Excessive consumption of alcohol impairs the brain. As it has been demonstrated, when an individual starts drinking at a young age, his brain could be impaired. This would make it difficult to encode and retrieve ideas and therefore affect the thinking capacity. The teen will end up performing poorly in class and ruining his future. As a matter of fact, when they perform better in school, they will be able to get good jobs and earn enough to enjoy a bottle of beer and live comfortably.

Initially, the demand came from the libertarian organizations only. However, the involvement by the academicians has boosted the debate. Although we cannot ignore the advantages and disadvantages, the most important thing at the moment is consensus that is backed by logic. More importantly, teen should take charge of their lives and live up to the society's expectations by taking responsibility on matters concerning alcohol consumption (Allison, 1999).