

Ms. Betty MacPhee, Manager of Vancouver's Crabtree Corner, stated:

"I have great difficulty understanding the reluctance of the alcohol industry to label their products . . . Every woman has the right to be an informed consumer. Every woman should know there is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink when you are pregnant. It seems ludicrous that alcohol beverages exported from B.C. and the rest of Canada to the U.S.A. have had warning labels for two years, but the same bottles in our stores do not." <sup>44</sup>

The Sub-Committee believes that the reluctance of the beverage alcohol industry to include warning labels on containers is at least partly related to the importance that labelling has in the marketing of alcoholic products and product image. Dr. Gurprit Kindra, Associate Professor of Marketing at the University of Ottawa, offered the following testimony on this point:

"Information on the label and the nature of the package can enhance or damage the overall product offering. Information on the package plays the role of a salesperson. Information that appears on the label can also be viewed as an advertisement. So, warning labels in a way imply forced de-marketing from the brewers' and distillers' point of view. Labelling is part of an extremely delicate balance of the product mix .. (which) . . . is based on dreams, aspirations and desired lifestyles. A warning label of any kind will ruin the fun theme that is generally associated with beer and alcohol." <sup>45</sup>

The Sub-Committee is aware, as were most of our witnesses, that warning labels on containers of alcoholic beverages will not, by themselves, completely solve the problem of FAS and FAE, nor will they effectively reach all segments of society. Problem drinkers and alcoholics will probably not be sensitive to label warnings. The design and presentation of a warning label is vitally important to its effectiveness. The Sub-Committee has examined several examples of warning labels on alcohol products from the United States. In all cases, the warnings were generally inconspicuous and difficult to read. It is essential that warning labels adopted for Canadian products not emulate the United States examples, but be carefully designed for maximum visibility and impact. We believe that warning labels, properly designed and printed, are an essential part of a comprehensive strategy for increased public awareness and education about the risks that maternal alcohol consumption poses for the foetus.

#### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 5**

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada should amend the *Food and Drugs Act* and Regulations to require that containers for beverage alcohol sold in Canada, including beer, wine, and spirits, should carry an appropriate warning label alerting all consumers that consumption of alcohol during pregnancy places the foetus at risk for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Foetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).

#### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 6**

The Sub-Committee further recommends that the form of the warning label on beverage-alcohol containers should be designed with appropriate regard for readability, perceptual prominence, colour contrast and impact. Also, the design and content of the warning label shall be approved by the Minister of Health and

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<sup>44</sup> Proceedings, Issue 13, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Proceedings, Issue 14, p. 18.