

Advertising for alcoholic products appears in numerous formats, including magazines and newspapers, on radio and television, on billboards and posters, and other media. The Sub-Committee believes that it is important to include effective warnings about the serious impacts of alcohol on the foetus on all forms of advertising for alcoholic products.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 9

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada, in consultation with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, prescribe regulations to require that appropriate and effective warnings about the serious impacts of alcohol on the foetus be included as part of all advertising of alcoholic beverages in Canada.

(G) PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

The issue of public awareness and education is important because prevention of disease is the first line of defense in health care. This is particularly true in the matter of FAS and FAE. Both conditions are totally preventable. If a woman abstains from consumption of alcohol during the period of her pregnancy, her baby will be protected from alcohol damage. Although all witnesses agreed that public awareness was essential, there was sharp disagreement on the current state of awareness of the Canadian public. Industry witnesses argued that general public awareness of the FAS/FAE issue has already been achieved. Other witnesses argued that public awareness is not as high as industry claims.

The Canadian Brewers Association presented the results of an Angus Reid Group survey suggesting that "92% of the population were aware that excessive consumption of alcohol by women during pregnancy increased the potential for birth defects among children." ⁴⁸ The survey also indicated that awareness among women of conventional child-bearing age was 95%. The Angus Reid survey was conducted by telephone, and did not include either the Yukon or the Northwest Territories.

Based on the results of this survey, the Brewers Association believes that general public awareness of the FAS/FAE issue has been achieved and that only 3% of the general population remains to be made aware:

"Of the general (Canadian) population, 5% did not answer the question, 3% were unaware (of the risk) . . . more can be done to reach the 3% of the population unaware of the danger of excessive (alcohol) consumption . . . We believe the audience yet to be reached includes the native population and lower-income, inner-city residents. We have been reviewing ways in which we can reach these people, and frankly, it's a difficult problem. Two of the problems may be language barriers and illiteracy." ⁴⁹

The Association of Canadian Distillers stated that Decima Research had conducted a survey for them in 1990 which:

" . . . showed that 88% of Canadian women already believe that pregnant women should not consume any alcohol beverages at all during the term of their pregnancy. Furthermore, when probed on the seriousness of a range of concerns associated with beverage alcohol consumption,

⁴⁸ Proceedings, Issue 8, p. 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.