

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Report on Caffeinated Alcoholic Beverages Calls for More Guidelines and Warnings to Young Adults and Parents

**May 24, 2012** – Consumption of [caffeinated alcoholic beverages](#) continues to rise in Canada, despite explicit warnings about health and safety risks from Health Canada, provincial health ministries and even energy drink producers.

A new report from the [Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse](#) (CCSA) and the [Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia](#) (CARBC) at the University of Victoria is the first of its kind in Canada to examine consumption trends and risks, and comprehensively review existing policies for caffeinated alcoholic beverages in Canada.

“The increasing use of caffeinated alcoholic beverages has meant significant health risks, particularly among young people,” says co-author Kristina Brache, who is with CARBC. “This issue warrants urgent attention from policymakers, educators and researchers — in particular focusing on the ways some consumers mix their own high-alcohol and high-caffeine drinks.”

“Our report provides information to help Canadians better understand the risks associated with combining alcohol and caffeine,” said Gerald Thomas, co-author and Senior Research and Policy Analyst for CCSA. “Our report also includes policy, regulatory and public awareness recommendations designed to address the risks and harm that can come from drinking caffeinated alcoholic beverages of all types. Young adults should be a major focus of our efforts as they are the biggest consumers of these products.”

*Caffeinated Alcoholic Beverages in Canada: Prevalence of Use, Risks and Recommended Policy Responses*, by Kristina Brache and Tim Stockwell of CARBC, and Gerald Thomas of CCSA, includes the following information:

- Analysis of sales of premixed caffeine and alcohol drinks in seven provinces and the first national survey data on use.
- In-depth review of the current policy and regulatory environment.
- Informed recommendations targeted at policy makers, health organizations and researchers.

In addition to the full report, a [policy brief on alcohol and caffeine](#) is available on the CCSA website.

#### ***Young adults—the biggest consumers—at greatest risk***

Caffeinated alcoholic beverages are drinks that contain a mixture of alcohol and caffeine. They are currently available in two forms: pre-mixed by manufacturers or hand-mixed by consumers. Sales of premixed alcohol energy drinks in Canada increased 296% between April 2005 and April 2010. Young adults in Canada consume these drinks at levels four times higher than the general public.

Emerging evidence, covered in the full report, suggests that drinking alcohol and caffeine can be more dangerous than drinking only alcohol, because caffeine is a stimulant that can make people think they are less intoxicated than they really are. This can also lead to longer and more active drinking sessions and higher alcohol consumption.

Drinking caffeinated alcoholic beverages increases the risk of

- being sexually assaulted or sexually assaulting someone;
- driving drunk or getting a ride from a driver who is drunk;
- getting injured or into a fight;
- getting more drunk than realized; or
- experiencing a high heart rate.

To educate parents and young adults, CCSA and CARBC have developed [fact sheets on caffeinated alcoholic beverages](#), also available on the CCSA website.

For more information, visit

<http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Priorities/Alcohol/Caffeinated-Alcoholic-Beverages-in-Canada/Pages/default.aspx>

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**About CCSA:** The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) provides national leadership, develops sustainable partnerships and advances solutions to ensure that all people in Canada live in a healthy society free of alcohol- and other drug-related harm.

#### **About CARBC:**

The Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia (CARBC) at the University of Victoria is an internationally recognized research hub dedicated to the study of psychoactive substance use and addiction that supports community-wide efforts to promote health and reduce harm.