

June 21, 2010

New program to create a safe night out at bars, pubs and clubs

Edmonton... Setting high standards for bars to reduce alcohol-related crime and help Edmonton residents enjoy a safe evening out is the goal of a new program being launched in Edmonton.

Best Bar None (BBN) is an accreditation and awards program that raises service and management standards to help eliminate violence in and around licensed establishments. Already a popular and successful program in many areas of the United Kingdom, *BBN* is being piloted in Edmonton by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Service.

“It’s difficult to think of anything more beneficial to a community than increased safety and decreased violence, and that’s the focus of the *Best Bar None* program,” said Frank Oberle, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, responsible for the AGLC. “Everyone has a role to play in reducing violence in and around licensed premises, so Albertans can truly feel safe during a night out.”

BBN uses a system of accreditation, assessment and awards to pit night spots in a healthy competition with each other, to earn the right to be recognized as excelling in public safety and customer service.

“We know there’s a correlation between well-managed establishments and safety,” said Mayor Stephen Mandel. “Last November, Edmonton was recognized by the Responsible Hospitality Institute as North America’s *Most Sociable City*, for our initiatives to improve safety while maintaining a vibrant night life. With the *Best Bar None* program, the focus is on prevention and how good business and service practices can increase safety for Edmontonians.”

Since the *BBN* program was piloted in Manchester in 2003, accredited premises have been experiencing significant drops in violence in surrounding areas, even larger drops in violence inside their businesses and impressive increases in trade.

“We support initiatives that help to reduce violence in and around nightclubs and bars,” said Edmonton Police Service Deputy Chief Norm Lipinski. “*Best Bar None* really tackles this problem from the inside out; that is, it starts with the licensees working with their staff and their general operations to meet or exceed *Best Bar None*’s high standards. We’re very excited about the potential of *Best Bar None* to reduce violence in and around licensed premises.”

Licensed establishments will compete for the distinction of Best Overall, Best and Runner Up with the pilot project ending with an awards ceremony in late 2010. For more information on the program visit bestbarnone.ab.ca.

Backgrounder: *Best Bar None* in Edmonton

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What is *Best Bar None (BBN)*?

BBN is a recognized accreditation and awards program that promotes the responsible management and operation of licensed premises. It was developed in the United Kingdom by the Greater Manchester Police and City Safe and launched in 2003. The purpose of the voluntary program is to reduce alcohol-related crime by setting high standards for public safety and customer service in bars, pubs and clubs. *BBN* is a collaborative program, as the operators of licensed premises work with industry partners, law enforcement, business and community associations and patrons to create a safe and enjoyable environment both inside and outside their establishments.

In 2009, there were more than 95 *BBN* programs operating in the UK, reporting significant reductions in alcohol-related crime, improved operations of licensed premises, a shifting of attitudes among patrons regarding alcohol consumption and a growing preference to frequent accredited *BBN* establishments.

How do the industry, enforcement agencies, business and community associations and groups work together on *Best Bar None*?

The industry and agencies involved in *BBN* understand the correlation between well-managed establishments and safety. The more licensed premises that raise their standards of operation and customer service to the level required to be *BBN*-accredited the better, for the industry, the patrons and area residents and businesses.

As they come in contact with licensees, the Public Safety Compliance Team (member of the *BBN* Project Team) will be encouraging licensees to develop their establishments to the high standards of the *BBN* program. Also represented on the Project Team, the licensees themselves will promote accreditation with *BBN* among their fellow industry members. Project Team member Responsible Hospitality Edmonton has been busy promoting *BBN* to a variety of community stakeholders, including the Business Revitalization Zone Association, community leagues and the Old Strathcona Area Community Council. In the course of their meetings with licensees, AGLC and City of Edmonton inspection and licensing officials will promote the program and its benefits to licensees.

Who can participate in *Best Bar None*?

Information packages have been sent out to 330 Class A Minors Prohibited licensed establishments in Edmonton and any interested licensees may apply.

How do licensed establishments earn *Best Bar None* accreditation or awards?

Licensees will receive an information package containing an application form and criteria checklist. The checklist identifies a wide range of operational, service and customer safety criteria that well-managed premises should be aware of and address.

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A trained assessor will contact the licensee to arrange an appointment to visit the establishment and review the criteria checklist. The assessment is **not** a compliance inspection, but is an opportunity to go through the checklist and offer feedback and advice. The assessment will be scored and if all the essential criteria are met, the premises will receive *BBN* accreditation.

The licensees with the highest score and second highest score in each category are awarded the distinctions of Runner-Up and Best. The assessments for the best of each category will then go before a judging panel, who will decide the winner of the “Best Overall” award.

How do businesses benefit from accreditation?

Accredited premises will receive a plaque and door signage to display, that will inform patrons and area residents and businesses of their participation in the program and their commitment to public safety and customer service. Accredited facilities may also use the *BBN* logo and the fact of their accreditation (and possibly award) in their advertising.

By earning their *BBN* accreditation and displaying related signage, licensed establishments will be identified and recognized as responsible and courteous establishments. As a result of earning their *BBN* accreditation, these venues will be frequented by patrons seeking a safe and fun night out.

Is there a cost for licensees to accredit with *Best Bar None*?

At this point, because this is a program pilot, there is no cost to licensees.

Will this program eventually be implemented across the province?

The Edmonton pilot will culminate in the awards ceremony in the late fall. After that, the program pilot will be assessed and if deemed successful, it’s anticipated that the program would likely begin to expand to Calgary and potentially to other communities.

For more information on *Best Bar None*, visit bestbarnone.ab.ca.

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