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Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Launches Enhanced Strategy To Target Liquor Mart Theft

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is deploying a multi-point theft reduction plan to combat Liquor Mart thefts and robberies while protecting the safety of employees and customers.

Liquor & Lotteries has been working closely with the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) to identify and arrest suspects using in-house technologies and intelligence. These collaborative efforts have resulted in 113 arrests since October 2018; however, aggressive thieves and an increase in the frequency of thefts has resulted in the need to introduce additional security measures to ensure the safety of employees and customers while protecting assets.

“Individuals who take alcohol products without paying have become increasingly brazen and unpredictable when confronted, and the measures we’re taking address this shift,” said Liquor & Lotteries President and CEO Peter Hak. “We want our customers and our employees to know that we take their safety seriously and we also want to send the message that if you steal from a Liquor Mart, you will be caught.”

Tactics under the bolstered strategy include:

- New trained Loss Prevention Officer team stationed at stores during peak periods or where incidents of theft have increased;
- Expanded use of uniformed Special Duty Constables in Winnipeg Liquor Marts;
- As per our “Show your Age” program, customers appearing under the age of 25 will continue to be required to show proof of age at point of purchase. All customers who enter a Liquor Mart, regardless of age, may be asked to show valid, government-issued photo ID to a security guard at the door. Those who are unable to produce the required identification may be refused entry;
- Requiring customers to check bags when entering some stores using a claim check system;

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- Video displays at store entrances to alert potential thieves they are being recorded along with continued use of high-resolution digital surveillance to assist WPS to identify and arrest suspects after they've left the store;
- Bottle locks and alarm pedestals and lockable shelf cases to secure high-value targeted products; and
- Making certain high-value targeted products are available on a by-request basis.

Other future measures will include:

- creating additional physical barriers such as controlled entrances and exits;
- additional security staff to support current complement; and
- enhanced surveillance.

While some of these measures are already in place, others will be rolled out over the next several weeks and months, said Hak, adding that the measures will be supported by a public information campaign to let Manitobans know what to expect when they shop at Liquor Marts. The campaign includes sharing information about security measures and ongoing arrests at MBLL.ca/StopTheft, as well as outdoor signage, in-store posters, and digital media messages.

Chief of Police Danny Smyth says the organization has continued to work with Liquor & Lotteries to address theft concerns and supports the new measures.

"Liquor & Lotteries has presented a wide-ranging set of measures to detect and deter theft in their stores," said Smyth. "I look forward to being a part of those measures and supporting Liquor & Lotteries in their initiatives."

Crown Services Minister Colleen Mayer also expressed support for the new measures. "I am encouraged by the actions that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries will be working to implement to curb thefts and improve safety for their customers and employees. Manitobans deserve to feel safe, and these steps strengthen the commitment to safety that we share."

Liquor & Lotteries has also been working in close contact with the Manitoba Government Employees Union (MGEU); which represents Liquor Mart employees.

"We are very encouraged by these initiatives. It shows that the employer has taken the concerns we've raised on behalf of liquor store employees seriously and has come up with a well-thought out plan," said MGEU President Michelle Gawronsky. "We will be anxiously waiting to see the results of these initiatives and what the outcomes will be."

Despite the rise in thefts over the past year, Hak says that theft of liquor products remains very low when compared to the retail industry average. He said the new measures are structured to strengthen theft prevention while maintaining a high-quality shopping experience for all Manitobans.

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