

Tougher rules coming for impaired drivers

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CALGARY HERALD

The potential consequences of having a few drinks and getting behind the wheel are going to get stronger in Alberta.

As expected, the Progressive Conservative government confirmed Thursday that legislation to allow administrative licence suspensions and vehicle seizures for drivers whose blood-alcohol level is between 0.05 and 0.08 will be introduced in the legislature sitting that begins Monday.

Government house leader Dave Hancock said the penalties will see a first-time offender subject to a three-day suspension of their licence and a three-day seizure of their vehicle. A second-time offender could lose their licence and vehicle for 15 days.

Driving with a blood alcohol concentration over 0.08 is an offence under the federal Criminal Code.

Under the provincial legislation, drivers who blow over that level could receive a suspension and seizure until criminal charges are resolved. Penalties will not include fines.

The legislation has raised



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Government house leader Dave Hancock is following B.C.'s lead in introducing tougher impaired-driving legislation.

concerns it will lead to a crack-down — or at least a chill — on drivers who have had a minimal amount to drink.

But Premier Alison Redford, in a conference call from Ottawa, said the legislation is intended to “change the culture” and make people think about drinking responsibly.

“This is about saying to people they need to be accountable for their actions and it will be for them to determine what choices they will make. But it is not targeting people who’ve had one glass of wine,” she said.

The new law mirrors legislation first introduced in British Columbia.

While B.C.'s hospitality sector has said the law has had a major negative impact on business, Hancock said the government has not had “significant pushback to date from the restaurant industry.”

Both Wildrose and the NDP say they are likely to oppose the legislation because it does not address the real issue — heavy drinkers and insufficient enforcement of existing laws.

Wildrose MLA Rob Anderson said the bill was indicative of a “nanny state” government.

Liberal MLA Hugh McDonald said the party has not yet taken a formal position.

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