

MUNICIPAL ALCOHOL PROJECT

Changing the culture of alcohol in Nova Scotia

The issue is not that Nova Scotians drink alcohol – it's *how* we drink alcohol.

Nova Scotians are among the heaviest drinkers in the country - and we are all affected.

We could be a parent worried about his daughter who binge drinks on weekends; or a spouse watching her husband spend money on beer instead of food. We could be the heart attack patient who has to wait precious seconds for an ambulance that is at the scene of a car crash caused by a drunk driver. We could be a taxpayer who sees their hard-earned tax dollars being spent trying to fix alcohol-fed problems; or we could be a Nova Scotian who has a hard time saying no to just one more drink.

Alcohol is present (almost) everywhere: sporting events, shopping malls, restaurants and bars, Internet sites and community cultural events. We are told that you can't play sports without having some beers and drinking means more sex. Having a party? Make sure there's enough liquor. In fact, host your son's drinking party – there are worse things he could be doing than getting drunk.

Really?

Unless we change the culture of alcohol use in Nova Scotia, harms like the ones experienced by the three towns in this study won't go away. So, how do we work towards a culture of moderation and support healthy, safe and social communities?



There are things we can do.

How we drink alcohol is impacted by local, provincial, national and global factors. Actions to change the culture of alcohol need to happen on each level.

The following actions will decrease the amount of alcohol consumed by the whole population. They will have the **biggest impact** on reducing the harms from alcohol.

Alcohol Advertising & Marketing

- ✓ Restrict **alcohol advertising**: alcohol is not milk and cookies. Young people are especially vulnerable to advertising. Alcohol marketing should be carefully regulated.
- ✓ **Restrict** alcohol industry **sponsorship of community events** (cultural, sport, art, general). Physical activity and community spirit should be linked to healthy communities – not alcohol.
- ✓ **Clearly** label alcohol to communicate harms. Alcoholic products should look **very different** from non-alcoholic products. This is not the case for newer products aimed at the youth market.

Access

Do we need almost 24-hour access to a **potentially harmful product**? The easier it is to get alcohol, the greater the harms - that's what the research shows.

- ✓ **Restrict hours** and **days** of operation - including bars, taverns, lounges, and other places where alcohol is sold.

- ✓ Maintain **government control** over sales: privatization is linked to more harm, including the sale of alcohol to minors.
- ✓ Control **expansion** of liquor stores.
- ✓ Restrict density – What’s good for a night out on the town may not be **good for the community**. When many bars and liquor stores are close together, problems happen.

Pricing

The price of alcohol can encourage or discourage binge drinking.

- ✓ Maintain and regularly review a **minimum price** per standard drink in licensed establishments.
- ✓ Ensure alcohol products are priced according to alcohol content. **High alcohol volume** products should be the most expensive.
- ✓ The **Alcohol Price Index** should be on par with or higher than the Consumer Price Index.

There are other actions that **target** those who drink alcohol – those who may be drinking harmfully.

- ✓ Enforce strong drinking and driving counter measures.
- ✓ Make licensed establishments safer by requiring house policies that promote moderate alcohol use.
- ✓ Carry out social marketing campaigns that support the alcohol harm reduction policies.

What Can Municipal Governments Do?

Municipal and community leaders have an important role to play in reducing alcohol harms in the community. There are actions municipalities can take that will make a difference.

- ✓ Have **conversations** and dialogue with other community members about how alcohol is affecting your community.
- ✓ Develop a community alcohol strategy with citizens, local businesses, community organizations and health and justice agencies, to reduce alcohol harms and promote moderation.
- ✓ Develop and enforce strong **municipal by-laws** that :
 - restrict hours of operation of licensed establishments and alcohol retail outlets;
 - limit the number, density and location of licensed establishments and alcohol retail outlets;
 - keep the peace (excessive noise, public alcohol consumption, creating a disturbance, etc.).
- ✓ Restrict alcohol industry advertising and sponsorship of community, sporting and cultural events.
- ✓ Organize **community celebrations** that are non-alcoholic.
- ✓ Work with the provincial and federal governments to develop and implement policies and regulations that are proven to reduce alcohol-related harms.



To promote a moderate culture of alcohol use in Nova Scotia, a **comprehensive** approach is needed.

Strong **leadership** and **collaboration** with communities are the keys to success.

For information on the Municipal Alcohol Project e-mail: municipalalcoholproject@avdha.nshealth.ca