



Provincial Alcohol Action Plan

Reducing Harms and Costs
in Newfoundland and Labrador



Newfoundland
Labrador

In June 2017, the Provincial Government released **Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador** to guide the transition of the provincial mental health and addictions system to one that is person-centered, trauma-informed and recovery-oriented. **Towards Recovery** called for the development of a provincial alcohol action plan focusing on promotion and prevention, screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment services.

While Newfoundland and Labrador is a resilient and vibrant province, alcohol-related harms cost this province greatly. In fact, in 2017, Newfoundland and Labrador alcohol-related costs amounted to \$318 million, including costs related to lost productivity, health care, criminal justice, and other direct costs, such as property and motor vehicle damages. Alcohol is the cause of nearly 15,000 deaths in Canada every year, with more people hospitalized for conditions entirely due to alcohol than for heart attacks.

The harmful use of alcohol is one of the leading risk factors impacting population health worldwide. It is linked to over 200 health conditions, ranging from liver diseases to cancers, including larynx, esophagus, colon and rectum, liver, and breast cancers; cardiovascular diseases; tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. It also impacts brain development in fetuses leading to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD); as well as deaths by suicide and injuries due to motor vehicle accidents and violence. Furthermore, alcohol consumption can worsen mental health issues, risk-taking behaviours, and contribute to violence, neglect and compromised ability to provide safety and basic needs. This leads to health and safety issues within families, communities, and on roads, trails and waterways.

The Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador sets a path to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms through a strong collective, public health-based approach and commitment by all partners; one that includes supports and services tailored for individuals identified as higher risk to encounter alcohol-related harm. This plan also acknowledges and values Indigenous-led approaches to reduce alcohol-related harm, and supports Indigenous-led strategies and programs for Innu, Inuit and Mi'Kmaq peoples and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Continued partnerships with Elders and other Indigenous leaders and organizations is vital to ensure culturally relevant and specific strategies are considered.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes the impact social determinants of health, such as income, education status, and physical and social environments, have on a person's health and well-being. Experiences, such as poverty, homelessness, systemic racism, intergenerational trauma, ageism, transphobia or homophobia, newcomers to Canada and persons with disabilities can present barriers and inequities when accessing mental health and addictions programs and services. Government will continue to strive for equitable access, support healthy living and wellness strategies, as well as social and emotional learning curriculum and programs within schools, focused on helping youth develop skills to build healthy relationships, empathy, and resiliency. Further, government will apply a stepped-care approach to interventions and treatment to ensure appropriate levels of care are readily accessible, and will continue to maintain a focus on impaired driving using a variety of effective countermeasures.

The Provincial Alcohol Action Plan will be monitored with annual reporting based on indicators, such as alcohol sales, consumption rates, alcohol-related deaths and injury, hospitalizations, and treatment wait times. There will be regular reporting to the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council and Recovery Council. Data analysis from a provincial population health lens will inform evidence-based decision making, with particular emphasis on social determinants of health and populations that face higher risk for alcohol-related harms. The Provincial Alcohol Action Plan sets out the following 13 actions to reduce harms and costs associated with alcohol use.

Prevention and Promotion: Accessing credible information about alcohol use can assist people to make informed decisions and create awareness about moderate drinking

Healthy Living

- 1 Increase awareness about drinking patterns, promote healthy living strategies, with a focus on reducing alcohol-related harms, and develop targeted, evidence-informed, social marketing campaigns to support individuals to make safer, informed decisions about alcohol use, when possible.

Awareness of High-risk Drinking

- 2 Support provincial FASD networks to improve capacity for prevention, screening and assessment and increase understanding of the services required by individuals affected by FASD.
- 3 Work with the Federal Government and other provinces/territories on the requirement of health and safety labelling on alcohol products, similar to the labeling requirements for tobacco and cannabis.

Stigma Awareness

- 4 Provide education to diverse target audiences to reduce stigma related to alcohol use and alcohol use disorder, and the impacts of adverse childhood experiences and intergenerational trauma.

Treatment: Ensuring a greater role for primary health care providers and community-based partners in screening and assessment can assist in early intervention, treatment, aftercare and recovery

Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral

- 5 Educate primary health care providers, police agencies, and community organizations to consistently screen, intervene early and offer supports, including harm reduction measures.
- 6 Incorporate screening, brief intervention and referral tools at all points of care, such as primary health care settings, emergency departments, Doorways, 811, bridgethegapp.ca, hospitals and community agencies.

Alcohol Treatment,
Aftercare and
Recovery

- 7 Establish a culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, stepped-care treatment approach for alcohol use, including home-based withdrawal management.
- 8 Explore the expansion of the regional opioid dependence treatment hubs to provide rapid access to treatment for all substance use disorders, including alcohol, and increase the number of providers with knowledge and skills in addictions medicine.

Harm Reduction

- 9 Support the Provincial Harm Reduction Team in the development of guidelines for managed alcohol programs, and provincial harm reduction guidelines for primary health care, acute care, and community-based settings.

Monitoring and
Surveillance

- 10 Develop indicators and monitor data, such as alcohol sales, consumption rates, alcohol-related deaths and injury, hospitalizations, and wait times for treatment using various demographics, including gender, to ensure inclusive reporting.

Availability: Decreasing the physical availability of alcohol can lead to decreased consumption, which in turn leads to a reduction in alcohol-related harms

Pricing

- 11 Review the current statutory minimum price per standard drink defined in the **Liquor Control Act** for on-premise establishments and the concept of minimum pricing for off-premise outlets.

Physical
Availability

- 12 Review existing density and placement of on- and off-premise establishments and the appropriateness of their current hours of operation.

Advertising
and Marketing

- 13 Amend the **Liquor Control Act** to develop regulations regarding alcohol-related marketing, advertising, sponsorships and promotions to support moderate and responsible consumption.