

# Changing the Culture of Alcohol Use in Nova Scotia

*Responding to the Nova Scotia Alcohol Strategy: Provincial Initiatives  
led by the Department of Health Promotion and Protection*



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*This document is a summary of the Department of Health Promotion and Protection's key actions in the first year of the Nova Scotia Alcohol Strategy.*

# Community Capacity and Partnership Building



- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection has committed to ongoing funding for the five staff positions in the District Health Authorities' Addiction Services Shared Service Areas to support the development and implementation of the Alcohol Strategy. These positions were initiated in 2006–2007. In addition, a full-time Addiction Prevention and Community Education, Coordinator position was established in February 2005 at the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, Addiction Services, and serves as the key staff position to support the strategy implementation.
- Work has commenced on the development of an alcohol tool kit. The core part of the kit will feature factual information about harmful alcohol use in Nova Scotia and provide direction for raising community awareness about alcohol as a public health issue. The initial component of the kit will be available in fall 2007. Further components will address best practices related to target populations and contexts.
- Planning will commence for an annual alcohol forum to focus on best practices, related knowledge development, and skill building consistent with preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm in Nova Scotia. The inaugural forum is tentatively planned for 2008. The forum will be of interest to our strategy partners and stakeholders.
- Stakeholders' meetings will be initiated by the Department of Health Promotion and Protection by December 2007 to finalize go-forward action steps on alcohol-related issues. Underage drinking (with a focus on access to alcohol), overdrinking among youth and 19–29-year-olds (with a focus on reducing binge drinking and drinking to intoxication), and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder will be the focus of these meetings.

- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection, Addiction Services, is actively engaged in identifying opportunities for collaboration and relationships on alcohol-related issues with established strategies, including the *National Alcohol Strategy*, the *Nova Scotia Chronic Disease Strategy*, and the *Nova Scotia Injury Prevention Strategy*. The Department is actively involved in the development of the *Nova Scotia Drug Strategy* and is a partner in the *Strategy to Reduce Impaired Driving in Nova Scotia* through the activities of the Road Safety Advisory Committee and the Driving While Impaired Provincial Committee.

# Communication and Social Marketing



- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection has initiated the development of a communication plan to raise the profile of alcohol misuse as a public health issue. Development of an alcohol tool kit and communications training for District Addiction Services' prevention staff have also been initiated.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection is providing input into the development of national low-risk drinking guidelines. Once finalized, these national guidelines for Canadians will be incorporated into new web-based and print materials. Guidelines are expected in early 2008.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will coordinate the updating of alcohol-related fact sheets for distribution by District Addiction Services beginning in fall 2007. New issues-based fact sheets will be identified and developed by March 2008.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will continue to build on the evidence-based targeted communications for 19–29-year olds (Extreme Drinking poster, fact sheets, brochure, and ads) by expanding the Extreme Drinking Campaign, and developing the next phase of the campaign — “Life After the Party” — beginning in late fall 2007.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will work with stakeholders to call attention to the impact of consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will assist the District Health Authorities in promoting the work of Addiction Services during Addictions Awareness Week (November 18–24, 2007), as well as raising the profile of alcohol misuse as a public health issue in Nova Scotia by providing promotional materials, coordinating an Addiction Awareness Week Newsletter, and coordinating and promoting a schedule of District Addiction Services-sponsored events throughout the province.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will assist the District Health Authorities' Addiction Services in developing their action plans to support this key direction as needed.



# Strengthening Prevention, Early Intervention, and Treatment



- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection has commissioned a report on “Best Practices in Preventing Problematic Substance Abuse” to provide current practice guidance for Addiction Services prevention specialists. The review and best practice statements will be finalized with the input of the District Health Authorities by December 2007. A review of prevention standards will follow in 2008.
- Approaches to formal screening and intervention have been initiated at the national level, and at the district level. The roles of the Department of Health Promotion and Protection regarding screening and brief intervention services will be to coordinate and consult with relevant government departments, and to facilitate opportunities for increased alcohol screening and brief intervention within the Primary Health Care System. This process will commence in 2008.
- Through the commission of a benchmark survey of the cultural dynamics of alcohol consumption, the Department of Health Promotion and Protection will explore the need for providing a common access point for crisis situations that occur after normal business hours and on weekends. In addition, the Department will explore the financial costs associated with preferred options identified by Nova Scotians. This research is expected to be completed by March 31, 2008.

- A new curriculum supplement *A Question of Influence: A Teacher's Drug Education Supplement for Health/Personal Development and Relationships*, Grades 7–9, with a significant alcohol component, has been developed and field tested, and was introduced to Nova Scotia schools in April 2007. The supplement, along with a teachers' website, will be fully implemented in the 2007–08 school year. Both English and French versions of the supplement will be available.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection is working in partnership with the Department of Education to identify needs with respect to school-based drug education actions for 2008–09. These recommendations are expected by February 2008.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection is collaborating with District Health Authorities' Addiction Services to produce and pilot a resource to support district managed and delivered training for Resident Assistants at universities and colleges for September, 2007.
- In 2007–2008, the Department of Health Promotion and Protection will continue to work with the Tourism Industry of Nova Scotia (TIANS) to develop a plan and process to review and update the *It's Good Business Responsible Beverage Service Program*. The plan will be implemented in 2008–2009.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will assist the District Health Authorities' Addiction Services in developing their action plans to support this key direction as needed.

# Healthy Public Policy



- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection is in the process of establishing an *Alcohol Policy Advisory Committee* to help set and initiate alcohol-related policy priorities and to develop a plan to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies related to alcohol-related harm. This will be initiated in September 2007.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection has initiated a discussion paper reviewing the potential harmful impact of alcohol sponsorship as it relates to activities and events affiliated with the Department. Dialogue with respect to a recommended policy will commence in 2008.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will continue to work with the Tourism Industry of Nova Scotia (TIANS) to develop a plan to review and update policies and regulations pertaining to the *It's Good Business Responsible Beverage Server Program*.
- During 2007–2008, the Department will develop a comprehensive workplace policy for its staff. This policy will foster a culture of wellness through the development of alcohol, substance use and gambling policies that are aligned with the mandate and vision of Health Promotion and Protection. The policies should reflect best practices for workplace prevention and early intervention, as well as provide guidance for the Department's inter-governmental and public messaging and programming.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection has initiated discussions with the Department of Education, through the Health Promoting Schools Initiative, regarding school-based alcohol and other drug use policy. The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will provide advice and recommendations to the Department of Education regarding evidence-based policy options to prevent and reduce alcohol use among school-aged students, and reduce harm if use does occur.

- In 2008, the Department of Health Promotion and Protection will formalize a collaborative approach with university and community college leaders to explore opportunities to implement or strengthen policies to support less harmful alcohol use by university and college students.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will assist the District Health Authorities' Addiction Services in developing their action plans to support this key direction as needed.

# Research and Evaluation



- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection has been actively involved in supporting an Atlantic Canada FASD Environmental Scan sponsored by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Atlantic Region. The scan will provide an overview of the prevalence and cost of FASD in Atlantic Canada by province, as well as an overview of policy initiatives relative to FASD. Results from this scan, expected to be released by fall 2007, will be utilized to inform our work with Nova Scotia stakeholders relative to FASD prevention.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will commission a benchmark survey of the cultural dynamics of alcohol consumption. These include knowledge, awareness, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours with respect to alcohol. The survey will encompass a representative sample of all Nova Scotians 15 years of age and older. The results will provide focused prevention, community education, and early intervention strategies to address harmful alcohol use among Nova Scotians and help to establish low-risk drinking guidelines that are acceptable to all Nova Scotians. It will also provide invaluable information about key areas to address in policy, communications, prevention, and early intervention strategies. Follow-up surveys will document the impact of the strategies and track subsequent changes in knowledge, perception, attitudes, and behaviours. This research will be completed by March 31, 2008.

- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will commission qualitative research to explore the context of underage drinking. This project will provide insight into how youth access alcohol, why they consume alcohol, and the context of that consumption. Rural and urban youth will be engaged in formal and informal discussions. This qualitative research will also include parents in order to assess their knowledge of, attitudes towards, and approaches to preventing and/or addressing alcohol use by their children. Meaningful youth engagement is required to develop a successful strategy to prevent and/or delay onset of drinking and to reduce harms when drinking is initiated. Youth perspectives on solutions for addressing underage drinking against a backdrop of best practices will ensure the development of appropriate and relevant policy, intervention, and program strategies. This research will be completed by March 31, 2008.
- Plans for a 2008 Nova Scotia Alcohol Indicators Report are under way. This report monitors the scope of alcohol-related harm in Nova Scotia. By February 2008, the department will establish an advisory group to guide the next iteration of the report, which will be completed and released in November 2008.
- Data collection of the Nova Scotia Student Drug Use Survey has been completed. A detailed analysis, which also includes trends related to alcohol consumption among Nova Scotia students in Grades 7,9, 10, and 12, will be released in November 2007.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will develop a plan to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the Nova Scotia Alcohol Strategy by the end of March 2008.
- The Department of Health Promotion and Protection will assist the District Health Authorities' Addiction Services in developing their action plans to support this key direction as needed.



