Access to Alcohol in Nova Scotia: A Community Health Concern

Increased access to alcohol leads to increased alcohol consumption. → Increased alcohol consumption leads to increased alcohol-related harm.1-6

Increased Access to Alcohol Comes at a Cost

✓ Areas with a greater number of bars, pubs, or liquor stores experience greater rates of alcohol-related problems such as violence, injury, youth impaired driving, child abuse, suicide, & chronic disease.7-12

✓ Communities with greater access to alcohol experience higher rates of hospitalization due to anxiety & depression.11

✓ While Nova Scotia government revenue from alcohol sales was $224 million in 2006, the direct governmental cost of alcohol is $242.9 million.14

Community Health in an Increasingly Privatized Alcohol Retail Environment

✓ Across Canada, there has been a trend towards privatizing alcohol retail, increasing access to alcohol, & increasing alcohol marketing.15 Nova Scotia has not been exempt from these risky trends.

✓ Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (NSLC) agency stores are a form of semi-privatized alcohol retail. Having access to alcohol in this format further increases risk to community health & safety.1, 5, 16

✓ Allowing access to alcohol within settings like grocery stores leads to increased alcohol consumption, particularly amongst all women, & people living in rural communities.17 In Atlantic Canada, alcohol retailers have described introducing alcohol sales into grocery stores as an opportunity to profit from encouraging "impulse" purchases of alcohol.18

✓ British Columbia experienced a significant increase in alcohol-related mortality following an increase in the number of privatized liquor stores.19

✓ Youth who grow up in towns where alcohol is accessible in convenience or grocery stores perceive alcohol as being easier to access & are more likely to have drank alcohol during the previous six months.
Access to Alcohol & Health

How available & accessible alcohol is within a community is largely influenced by: alcohol pricing & taxation, hours & days of sale, alcohol outlet density, & minimum purchase/consumption age.  

Alcohol:
- #1 Cause of premature death among young adults;  
- #3 cause of premature death globally;  
- Causally related to over 200 medical conditions;  
- Primary contributor to unintentional & intentional injury.  

Alcohol is responsible for:
- 5.9% of Premature Mortality, or 3.3 Million Deaths Every Year  

In Nova Scotia, there are over:
- 2300 places to purchase alcohol for consuming either onsite or at home.  

This represents approximately one place to purchase alcohol for every 315 Nova Scotians, aged 20 & above.  

How does this Impact Nova Scotia?

28% of Nova Scotians are heavy drinkers; this is higher than the national average.  

In Nova Scotia, youth have their first drink of alcohol at an average age of 13.  

Among Nova Scotian students (grades 7-12) who reported consuming alcohol in the past year, 55% experienced at least one alcohol-related problem.  

For a healthier, more sustainable Nova Scotia, researchers recommend the following actions regarding access to alcohol:
- Placing a moratorium on alcohol retail outlet density;  
- Reducing hours of operation for all alcohol retail outlets;  
- Maintaining a provincial monopoly on the sale of alcohol that focuses on the economic & health impact of communities rather than revenue generation.  

June 1, 2016
References


