

Event Summary

Background

As the season changes, we are seeing renewed media attention and discussions among policymakers on the topic of alcohol in parks. This roundtable provided an opportunity to:

- revisit the Alcohol in Parks [policy report](#) and [policy brief](#) and reflect on changes in the policy landscape since released in 2021;
- hear from CAPE CoP members about their experience of planning, assessment, implementation and/or evaluation of alcohol in parks initiatives;
- explore how the topic is being discussed in various jurisdictions, organizations and settings; who is advocating for and against various policies; what processes and powers are in place in various jurisdictions (e.g. bylaws); and
- connect with others working on this topic and share resources (e.g. data sources, surveys, evaluation reports etc).

Media coverage snapshot



For examples of media coverage, search for 'parks' in the [Alcohol Policy Resources & Media Archive](#)

What's happened since 2021?

In BC

- Several pilots made permanent (e.g. [Vancouver](#) City and Park Board, Penticton, West Vancouver)
Note: Vancouver will no longer permit alcohol at [beaches](#)
- New cities (e.g. Richmond) have conducted pilots, waiting on evaluation reports. City of Richmond [council minutes](#) contain staff report to council about pilot program and survey results summary (Attachment 4)

Outside BC:

- Edmonton now permanently allows alcohol consumption at [designated picnic sites](#)
- Jurisdictions that previously rejected pilots (Toronto, Ottawa) have either conducted them or are considering it
- Government of Saskatchewan has [amended legislation](#) to allow municipalities to consider alcohol in parks (Provinces/territories that currently allow local governments to designate specific public areas where alcohol consumption is permitted under certain conditions include BC, ON, NB, QC, AB, SK)
- In Quebec, municipalities such as Laval and Sherbrooke are joining Montreal and Quebec City in allowing alcohol consumption in parks with a meal

What is being measured?

- Many pilots either did not conduct evaluations or did not share findings in detail
- Edmonton: [2022](#) “what we heard” vs [2023](#) “what we heard” reports. When taking a Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) approach in the latter report, found less support for alcohol in parks, particularly in interviews vs surveys.
- Vancouver parks [public survey](#). Report notes that participation not representative of Vancouver residents (70% European background, over half with household income over \$80k, larger proportion of aged 30-39)

Resources shared during session

- Not Just a Walk in the Park: Unsupervised Alcohol Consumption on Municipal Properties in BC: Evidence-based, public health considerations for local governments to support healthy, vibrant communities.
 - Policy Report: <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/report-unsupervised-alcohol-consumption-municipal.pdf>
 - Policy Brief: <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/policy-brief-municipal-unsupervised-alcohol-consumption.pdf>
 - Infographics: <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/infographics-drinking-in-parks.pdf>
- District of Tofino Municipal Alcohol Policy: <https://tofino.civicweb.net/document/111681/>
- Local Government Alcohol Toolkit: Health Evidence & Recommendations (Interior Health, BC) <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/sites/default/files/PDFS/local-government-alcohol-toolkit.pdf>
- Prince Albert and Area Community Alcohol Strategy Steering Committee <http://www.paalcoholstrategy.ca/>
- Data tool to extract specific information on alcohol-related hospitalizations by hospital, long-term care organization, city, health region, province or territory: <https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/indepth>

Discussion summary

Note: PT = provincial/territorial; MAP = municipal alcohol policy

Addressing alcohol in parks as part of a Municipal Alcohol Policy (MAP)

- Need for a comprehensive approach across all areas that relate to alcohol (e.g. minimum distancing between licensed facilities, per capita licensing, zoning, limit on total number of licenses issued to sell alcohol, restrictions/bans on marketing and advertising, sponsorship, vending etc).
- Inconsistencies/contradictions between various efforts and policies at municipal level. How can municipalities navigate (e.g. greater recognition of indigenous land and working respectfully with first nations may include not using alcohol on that land, at the same time, efforts to expand public areas where alcohol may be consumed)?
- Tofino MAP: approached from public health and safety perspective, purpose to reduce harms and make more inclusive public events and facilities. Key to success is collaborative approach based on clear foundational principles. Engagement with and involvement of first nations, industry (e.g. restaurants/breweries), health and social services, RCMP etc. Anecdotal evidence of acceptance of policies, reduction in public health and safety concerns, more inclusive. Yet to conduct formal evaluation.

Advocating to/working with levels of governments

- Opportunities for health authorities to engage with local governments/municipalities to provide input and feedback on alcohol in parks pilots and other alcohol-related municipal policies. For example, local data/stats from health authority and policing, guidance documents, harm reduction tools, bring to attention voices and processes that may be missing in consultation and engagement (e.g. surveys). Opportunities to build/strengthen relationships.

- Support from Medical Health Officers can add weight in advocating for policies that support public health.
- Prince Albert Community Alcohol Strategy Steering Committee examples: letter to municipality asking not to designate any parks for alcohol consumption; letter calling for reduced operating hours for retail outlets, bylaw implemented and will be evaluated for impact over 12 months.
- Advocacy letters/efforts not currently resulting in desired outcomes. Conversations with councilors and municipalities starting to shift from annoyance/disinterest to interest/questions.
- How to work with provincial government during legislative change process (e.g. giving powers to municipalities); need to build relationships, keep ongoing conversations.
- Interplay and disconnect between municipal and PT (provincial/territorial) powers: PT can assign powers to municipal, municipalities may advocate for PT to implement policy (e.g. for consistency across PT, due to lack of resources, data in rural, small communities); each level waiting to see what the other does.
- Municipalities may be less motivated to do extensive evaluation (e.g., cost, time, and discourse such as parks as backyards for people living in high-density areas).
- Jurisdictions feeling public pressure to follow other jurisdictions who have allowed alcohol in parks.
- Recognize significant role of industry influence and lobbying activities on policymaking at all levels of government

What does a comprehensive evaluation look like?

- Currently a lot of variation in approaches to pilot program evaluation
- Need for guidance and criteria about how to measure harms and impacts
- Broader impact measures to accurately reflect harms (e.g. after the individuals leave the park/site)
- Equity analysis for impacts on people's ability to access public spaces, unhoused populations
- Consider characteristics of the jurisdiction: small/large geographic area, high-med-low densities, urban-rural...
- Need for comprehensive engagement and research, which takes time

Media/public discourse/issue framing

- Paradox/disconnect between values and norms related to substances: inconsistency of public consumption of some drugs allowed and not others (e.g. in relation to decriminalization); concern about substance use in public yet as same time support for expanding alcohol consumption in public
- Argument that lots of people are already consuming alcohol in parks and there is a lack of enforcement, so why not formally allow it and focus efforts on education
- Large variety of types of activities, beyond alcohol consumption, that people are 'for' or 'against' in parks
- Normalization may be associated with higher prevalence of consumption, stronger social norm
- De-normalization: potential to apply strategies used for tobacco (e.g. communicating impacts of normalization/marketing on children; product not visible at point of sale; advertising bans); currently more socially accepted that smoking is not okay in public parks; consider de-normalization versus stigma

Policy approaches to substances

- Alcohol policy approaches/conversations influenced by policies/frameworks applied to other substances; how to align policies across substances, work in tandem
- Questions about use of tobacco, vaping, cannabis in the context of alcohol in public parks and spaces

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