

ALCOHOL-RELATED ISSUES IN QUEBEC'S MUNICIPAL ENVIRONNEMENTS

CONSULTATION REPORT

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Our organization advises, investigates, raises awareness, mobilizes stakeholders and issues recommendations based on evidence, expert consensus, international experience and social acceptability.



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Overview

These findings are drawn from responses obtained from 135 Quebec-based municipal organizations between June and August 2023. The respondents are local (municipalities, cities, boroughs, towns, etc.) and supralocal (regional county municipalities and urban communities) entities from 16 different administrative regions, including 5 of the province's 10 most populous cities.

- **Two thirds of municipal organizations indicate experiencing or observing alcohol-related problems on their territory.**
- Smaller localities and those with an older population seem to report fewer or less frequent alcohol-related issues.
- **Recurring issues** are not necessarily considered priorities of action by municipal organizations. Indeed, they must manage several other daily challenges, leaving little room or resources for alcohol-related issues.
- **The issue of impaired driving** is identified as a priority by many municipal organizations. Nearly four out of ten organizations have observed this risky behaviour on their territory and a slightly greater proportion consider this issue to be among the most important in the municipal context.
- **The majority of municipal organizations allow alcohol consumption during events following their consent and authorization (51%).**
- Alcohol-related disturbances at events were reported by more than a quarter (27%) of municipal organizations. However, only 12% of organizations consider this issue to be a priority.
- **A quarter of municipal organizations** recognize **a problem with waste** generated by the consumption of alcoholic beverages in the public space, and **15% report having received complaints** or issued statements of offence or tickets on this matter.
- **Nearly one in five (17%)** organizations mention having already received complaints or issued violation tickets related to alcohol consumption in parks. Consequently, **a quarter of municipal organizations** have identified **nuisances related to alcohol consumption in parks** among relevant issues to be prioritized in their environment.
- **Several regulatory models governing alcohol consumption in parks exist.** Municipal organizations that have adopted rules on this issue are less likely to observe problems related to consumption in parks or to consider this issue a priority.
- **Half of the organizations have observed disorderly conduct** (disturbances, noise, etc.), violence or safety issues linked to alcohol consumption on their territory, either during events, on public roads or in public transit. Nearly a third of organizations consider alcohol-related harms to be relevant or priority issues.
- At least **half of the municipal organizations** surveyed **do not consider themselves sufficiently equipped and informed** to respond to issues around alcohol consumption. This is especially true of localities of fewer than 2,000 residents.
- **77% of organizations** are “interested” or “maybe interested” in learning more about alcohol-related issues and the various tools municipalities can use to address them.



Introduction

Alcohol consumption is culturally and socially accepted in Quebec¹. More than eight in 10 people aged 12 and over consume alcohol (a proportion higher than the Canadian average)² and at least 16% engage in heavy drinking³. Alcohol is thus the most consumed psychoactive substance among the Quebec population⁴. Far from being trivial, alcohol can cause, in the short or long term, various health problems in individuals, as well as exacerbate social issues⁵. By adding up the costs of social problems, healthcare, and disability resulting from alcohol consumption, the economic impact of alcohol-related harms in Quebec is estimated at nearly three billion dollars per year⁶. Preventing and reducing alcohol-related consequences therefore appears to be an essential social objective.

The regulation and distribution models of legal psychoactive substances such as alcohol vary from one substance to another, but also from one province to another in the country. The powers delegated to municipalities and the organization of the health system in Quebec also differ in certain aspects of from other provinces⁷. As local governments⁸, municipalities play a significant role in establishing environments conducive to health and safety. By the same token, they can have a significant impact on alcohol consumption habits⁹¹⁰. The tools and means to achieve this are, however, not always obvious or adapted to the realities of the actors involved. Municipal organizations must therefore organize themselves and respond to situations which sometimes go beyond their territorial, legal or human jurisdictions and powers.

Thus, many actors in the municipal and health sectors looking for best practices to adopt locally to reduce alcohol-related harms in a municipal context. The World Health Organization has also highlighted the need to “promote the development of municipal policies to reduce harmful use of alcohol.”¹¹

Based on these findings, the *Association pour la santé publique du Québec* (ASPQ) has proposed to investigate the involvement, issues and needs of municipal organizations regarding the consumption and sale of alcohol. As part of the “Normalizing Conversations: Engaging public health, public safety, and communities to build capacity for a public health approach to substance use” project of the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), the ASPQ consulted municipal organizations throughout Quebec to assess their views on regulation and policy models and of the actions undertaken regarding the consumption and sale of alcohol within the population.

As decision-maker and intervention bodies, the points of view and initiatives of 135 municipal organizations, spread across 16 administrative Quebec’s regions were collected in order to paint the most accurate and exhaustive portrait possible of their needs and the issues they experience concerning alcohol.

Objectives

This report describes consultations with Quebec municipal entities. The main goal is to help **municipal administrations, elected officials, professional members of the health sector and organizations working with psychoactive substances among the population** to have a better knowledge of the shared alcohol-related issues, needs, and promising initiatives in the municipal environment.

This knowledge aims to support:

- the sharing of knowledge and solutions;
- the creation of relevant tools and resources adapted to the municipal environment;
- the creation of safe environments with regard to alcohol consumption, healthy lifestyle habits, health and quality of life.

Methodology

In order to reach a diversity of municipal organizations with the power and authority to affect the regulation and prevention of alcohol consumption, the ASPQ chose to target municipalities, municipal boroughs, regional county municipalities (RCM), and metropolitan communities by reaching out to members of executive management or mayor's offices.

To contact these entities, the ASPQ used the Government of Quebec databases available online via the *Partenariat Données Québec* website¹². Quebec's Directory of Municipalities provides lists and contact details for all Quebec municipalities, RCMs and boroughs. Using public *Excel* files, downloaded on June 28, 2023, the ASPQ was able to create a list of contact details of organizations to target as part of the project. This list was also supplemented by the addition of contact details for metropolitan communities, found on their respective web pages. A few emails were no longer valid or came back with an error.

The ASPQ therefore created an online questionnaire consisting of 20 questions (in French, see Appendix I) to send to targeted municipal stakeholders. The questionnaire was sent by email to 1,261 organizations including:

- **87 regional county municipalities;**
- **2 metropolitan communities;**
- **41 boroughs in the cities of Quebec, Montreal, Saguenay, Longueuil, Lévis, Sherbrooke, Grenville-sur-la-Rouge and Métis-sur-Mer;**
- **1,131 municipalities, including the Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Regional Government, the Kativik Regional Administration and the northern, Naskapi and Cree villages.**

Following a first general sending in June 2023, a reminder was sent at the end of July to organizations belonging to administrative regions not yet represented among the responses received. The same reminder was sent to cities that had not yet participated and were among the 10 most populous cities of Quebec to encourage their representativeness.

Finally, between June 29 and August 18, 2023, the ASPQ received answers from 135 municipal organizations. From this group, some organizations mentioned their interest and availability to participate in an individual interview in order to explore certain answers in more depth. Three organizations, through a member of their general management or town hall office, were contacted for a specific interview of approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

All data was analyzed in such a way as to anonymize the responses and results for the participating organizations, except for any information already public (e.g., actual program or existing bylaw).

A questionnaire in French consisting of 20 questions was submitted to 1,261 municipal organizations between June and August 2023



Profile of responding organizations

135 municipal organizations from 16 administrative regions responded, including 5 of the province's largest cities

A total of 135 municipal administrations, both local and supralocal, from 16 of Quebec's 17 administrative regions of Quebec responded to the ASPQ's questionnaire, ensuring a representative portrait of Quebec's municipal environment. A larger than expected proportion of respondents came from the Chaudière-Appalaches region (21 organizations or 16% of responses). Also, 5 of Quebec's 10 most populous cities responded.

In line with Quebec's overall portrait, a large majority of responding organizations refer to themselves as "municipalities" or "cities", operate mainly in rural areas (71% of respondents) and have a population of less than 10,000 (76%).

We observe that municipalities and RCMs are statistically overrepresented among respondents, while parishes, northern villages and Cree villages are underrepresented compared to the portrait of Quebec as a whole (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number and percentage of responding organizations according to their legal designation, compared to the number and percentage of organizations of the same type throughout Quebec

Designation		Number and percentage (%) of responding organizations		Number and percentage (%) in all of Quebec (2020) ¹³	
Local Level	Municipality	80	59 %	650	51 %
	City	23	17 %	229	18 %
	Parish	4	3 %	141	11 %
	Village	4	3 %	43	3 %
	Regional Government	0	0 %	1	0,1 %
	Township	4	3 %	42	3 %
	United township	0	0 %	2	0,2 %
	Northern village and Kativik regional administration	0	0 %	14	1 %
	Cree and Naskapi village	0	0 %	9	1 %
	Borough	2	2 %	41	3 %
Supralocal Level	RCM	17	13 %	87	7 %
	Metropolitan community (MC)	1	0,8 %	2	0,2 %
Total		135	-	1 261	-

Results and findings of the survey

Challenges of alcohol consumption: a variable reality for every locality

Issues related to alcohol consumption and sale can have repercussions on various aspects of municipal and social life. As a result, multiple administrative services may be called upon to address them. **More than half of municipal organizations indicate experiencing or observing alcohol-related issues in their territory.**

One fifth (1 in 5 organizations) felt unable to answer the question and one third reported not experiencing any issues.

Among the respondents, geographical locations and socio-demographic profiles seem to have a strong influence on the perception and occurrence of alcohol-related problems. Smaller localities or those with an older population seem to observe fewer or less frequent alcohol-related problems. **Organizations that provide summer activities, have summer tourism infrastructures or navigable bodies of water seem more likely to encounter alcohol-related issues.**

Responding organizations were nevertheless able to identify several categories of experienced alcohol-related harms and problematic situations (see Table 2).

Table 2: Alcohol-related repercussions observed and experienced by municipal organizations

Situations	Number of organizations	Proportion of respondents (%)
Alcohol-impaired driving	50	37 %
No issues noted	44	33 %
Disturbances, violence or safety issues during events	36	27 %
Consumption disorders (addiction) within the population	34	25 %
Disturbances, violence or safety issues on public roads or on bodies of water	30	22 %
Disturbances, violence or safety issues in public transit	4	3 %
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	25	19 %

It is interesting to note that recurring issues mentioned are not necessarily those that are considered priorities of action by municipal organizations (see Table 3).

Table 3: Priority issues related to alcohol consumption identified by municipal organizations

Priority issues	Number of organizations	Proportion of respondents (%)
Alcohol-impaired driving	55	40 %
Consumption among youth or students	39	28 %
Nuisance linked to consumption in parks	35	25 %
Nuisances linked to consumption on public roads (e.g., uproar, noise, safety, etc.)	34	25 %
Problems linked to waste on public property	34	25 %
Significant consumption disorders (addiction) within the population	20	15 %
Consumption disorders among homeless people	18	13 %
Disturbances, violence or safety issues during events	17	12 %
Noises from establishments that serve alcohol (e.g., bars, restaurants and clubs)	8	6 %
No issues considered	6	4 %
Disturbances, violence or safety issues in public transit	1	1 %
Neighbourhood disturbances	1	1 %
Don't know/prefer not to answer	36	26 %

Half of the organizations indicated that they had not issued tickets or received complaints for alcohol related issues. This indicator is not totally reflecting reality considering **alcohol-related issues are not systematically subject to citizen complaints or violation tickets.**

Issues identified as priorities by at least a quarter of the respondents will be explored in the following sections.

Alcohol-impaired driving: the main priority

Impaired driving was identified as a priority issue by many responding organizations. **Nearly four organizations out of 10 have observed this behaviour on their territory and a few more consider the issue to be a priority in the municipal context.**

Alcohol-impaired driving can have serious consequences for the population. Municipal organizations are well placed to observe the impact of this issue on the well-being and security of their citizens: deaths, injuries, destruction of municipal infrastructure, feeling of insecurity, burden on health and security services, social and legal costs, etc. These are just some of the effects and repercussions that alcohol-impaired driving can cause in localities.

Since they do not have the same means and powers as federal and provincial governments, driving while impaired by alcohol remains a challenge for municipalities who must ensure the safety and well-being of their population. In this regard, **one third of the organizations expressed an interest in awareness tools to combat impaired driving.**

Road safety initiatives do not always include a component on driving under the influence of alcohol. Several interesting municipal initiatives on the matter and opportunities, such as policies, campaigns and programs have been listed.

40% of organizations consider impaired driving to be a priority issue



Municipalities, as partners in road safety, should be supported and encouraged to adopt measures and guidelines to combat impaired driving in general.

Examples of municipal initiatives addressing alcohol-impaired driving

- The **City of Quebec** adopted a **road safety strategy** in 2020, along with an implementation plan. Impaired driving, including alcohol-impaired driving, is addressed, and certain actions have been implemented, such as police roadblocks and conferences with students.
- The **City of Terrebonne** proposed a **road safety campaign** in 2015, which included efforts to raise awareness about alcohol-impaired driving.
- The **Longueuil Agglomeration Police**, in partnership with MADD Canada, launched its **911 campaign** to fight against impaired driving. The organizations encouraged those who witness unpredictable driving to call 911 in order to help police officers intercept cases of delinquent driving in the territory.
- Subsidized by the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ), the **CoDeBars program** is available in establishments in the **City of Sherbrooke**, the **Longueuil Agglomeration**, the **City of Gatineau**, and the **City of Laval**, among others. This impaired driving prevention service encourages designated drivers not to consume alcohol by promoting their role. Designated drivers are offered free non-alcoholic drinks during the evening. Municipalities can thus encourage establishments in their territory to join the program.



Alcohol consumption among young people and students: a transversal and multidisciplinary issue

Alcohol consumption is common among young people aged 15 to 29. In fact, 69% of them, a similar proportion to other age groups, consume it regularly, that is to say, at least once a month. This proportion is higher among the 20–29-year-olds (77%). As for so-called heavy drinking**, it prevails, compared to other age groups, among young people aged 15-29 (31%)¹⁴.

This consumption among adolescents and young adults can generate social challenges within localities: “among young people, excessive or regular consumption of alcohol is associated with health problems such as acute poisoning, trauma and violence. It is also associated with harm and the adoption of risky behaviors”¹⁵. Prevention and awareness among this population group should not be neglected.

The issue of consumption among young people and students nevertheless appears a transversal one since this consumption is included in the consumption of the population in general and it can have repercussions on several other issues and social realities such as impaired driving, hospitalizations, public order, etc. In this sense, it perhaps concerns mainly public health and community organizations in the area which particularly target this audience.

Municipal organizations must therefore find a balance between the economic activity brought by youth wishing, notably, to frequent establishments serving alcohol, and the social costs or possible social tensions resulting from this consumption. **Municipal areas welcoming more younger generations or post-secondary establishments on their territory would potentially be inclined to obtain more information and awareness tools targeting this group population.** The City of Sherbrooke has also undertaken an alcohol strategy targeting youth (to find out more, it is possible to consult the box on this subject in the section “Policies on alcohol use in public spaces: an underused tool”).

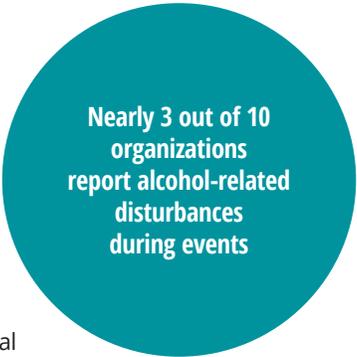
Disturbances and safety problems during events: a hot topic

This subject has been making a lot of noise for several years: how can we ensure the comfort, the safety and the integrity of festival-goers and spectators during municipal events and on the municipal venues? During large-scale events, the high amount of alcohol consumed can become an issue both for the waste it causes and for the well-being of those participating. Additionally, projects to extend hours of sale during events are being explored (e.g., Montreal¹⁶).

Alcohol-related disturbances at events were reported by more than a quarter (27%) of municipal organizations. However, this issue is identified as a priority only by 12% of the organizations.

Moreover, the majority of municipal organizations allow the consumption of alcohol during events following their authorization (51%).

On the other hand, a quarter of organizations recognize a problem with residual materials generated by alcoholic beverages in the public space, and 15% of organizations have even already received complaints or issued violation tickets in this regard. During such large events, the issue of waste on public property could be of greater concern.



Nearly 3 out of 10 organizations report alcohol-related disturbances during events

With the increase of integrity and safety denunciations by the population and cases of disturbances reported by organizations during events, this issue is one to keep an eye on. Efforts should be made to develop tools and resources to inspire and support municipalities.

** Heavy drinking corresponds to the consumption, on one occasion, of five drinks for men and four drinks for women, at least once a month over a period of 12 months.

Baie-Saint-Paul's *Le Festif!* introduces a "Comfort Zone"

The organization of the Festif de Baie-Saint-Paul has introduced a "comfort zone" on its site, where festival-goers can find organizations working to prevent and reduce harm linked to alcohol and drug consumption. This space can also be used by people feeling threatened or targeted by sexual, physical or psychological violence.

More and more festivals are adopting similar measures within the province. However, these initiatives remain discretionary to event organizations.

Alcohol consumption in public parks: an ongoing debate

The question of alcohol consumption in municipal parks and its consequences on the well-being of the community has been debated at great length, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada^{17 18 19}. This issue may raise questions of stigmatization, legalization, costs, operational processes, health, security and public order, particularly for more marginalized groups.

The chosen regulation and its social consequences have also been the subject of numerous discussions during the COVID-19 pandemic. While several administrations liberalized consumption in parks, the City of Quebec had to tighten its own to prohibit alcohol after 8 p.m. in parks following several excesses and disturbances²⁰.

Since, several municipalities have updated their regulations or proposed pilot projects to authorize or regulate the consumption of alcohol in their parks (e.g., Longueuil²¹, Sherbrooke²², Québec²³, Laval²⁴, and Mascouche²⁵).

In addition to questions of legal jurisdiction, municipal organizations must also consider the social acceptability of their proposed measures if they want to be able to ensure their adoption and application. Municipalities must therefore consider several factors when it comes to consumption in parks²⁶.

On the survey, nearly one in five organizations (17%) mention having already received complaints or issued violation tickets related to alcohol consumption in parks. Consequently, **a quarter of municipal organizations consider disturbances linked to alcohol consumption in parks as a relevant priority for their environment.**

A quarter of municipal organizations consider problems related to alcohol consumption in parks a priority

Municipal rules vary greatly on this question and some don't even address the subject:

- Authorization to consume alcohol in a park if accompanied by a meal/picnic (12%);
- Authorization to consume alcohol in parks without restriction (6%);
- Authorization to consume alcohol in public areas provided for this purpose (5%);
- Restriction of alcohol consumption in parks during certain periods or times (3%);
- Restriction of alcohol consumption in certain parks, at specific times and locations, if accompanied by a meal (1%);



Regardless of their chosen model and, notwithstanding their demographic density, **municipal organizations with rules relating to consumption in parks are proportionally less likely to note problems or to consider this issue a priority.** More of them, however, have received complaints and issued violation tickets since they provide supervision and rules to follow.

Relatedly, a similar proportion (25%) recognizes a problem arising from the consumption of alcohol on public roads (noise, disturbances, etc.), having observed such disturbances in their territory (22%). Public order subject will be address subsequently.

Regulations and their application: different approaches to alcohol-related issues

The majority of responding municipal organizations mention having certain rules governing alcohol consumption on their territory or, at least, regulations that can be modified for this purpose. This includes regulations on disturbances, quality of life or public order and planning restrictions for “bar” or “drinking establishment” type of businesses. However, not all municipalities regulate the consumption and sale of alcohol in the public space or consider it in urban planning. Nor is it all entities that provides strict enforcement of these regulations.

These different approaches reflect the social reality of each municipal organization. The choice to frame and apply a regulation depends on a multitude of factors specific to each locality, and these models all lead to varied consequences and results, both positive and negative. Among their choices, municipalities should consider the scale of the situation, the financial and economic impacts, the effects of attractiveness, the proportion of people from marginalized groups who are more vulnerable to the consequences of alcohol and the impact of measures on these people.

The setbacks of alcohol control for people experiencing homelessness: the cases of Montreal and Val-d’Or

A study²⁷ which analyzed 50,727 infraction reports between 2012 and 2019, in Montreal, underlines that the repression of consumption and inebriation constitutes the main reason for bringing homeless people before justice.

The use of alcohol or drugs as well as the state of intoxication in public spaces thus represent 82.8% of the reports issued to people experiencing homelessness under Montreal municipal regulations (*By-law concerning peace and order on public property*, R.R.V.M., c. P-1). This overjudicialization is all the more marked among Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, already over-represented among homeless people, amounting to 93% of all offense reports analyzed.

In this context, how can we establish measures and policies that avoid these harmful consequences for marginalized and over-judicialized communities who live in public spaces while preserving social cohesion?

Facing similar challenges, **the City of Val-d’Or** has implemented a homelessness strategy with the aim of providing resources to homeless people and improving social cohesion. The Homelessness Strategic Committee has developed, for the summer of 2023, a 4-pronged **action strategy** focusing on collaboration between communities:

1. Front-line intervention with homeless people via the Petepan project which includes a mobile intervention centre;
2. Raising public awareness through better communication;
3. The cleanliness and healthiness of the environment;
4. Cultural entertainment and community life in the city centre.

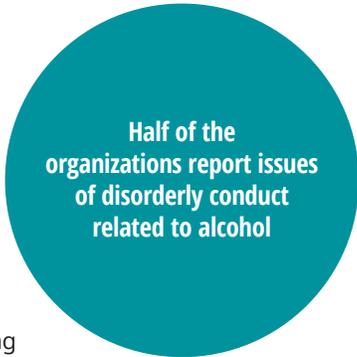


A matter of public order

Although alcohol consumption can affect several aspects of social life, municipal organizations tend to consider the issue mainly from the angle of security and public order, in public spaces and around bodies of water, which is reflected in the regulations adopted.

In fact, **half of the organizations report having observed issues of disorderly conduct (disturbances, noise, etc.), violence or safety linked to alcohol consumption**, during events, on public roads or in public transports. As mentioned previously, social context of each organizations means that not all misdeeds are repressed or the subject of infractions.

Nearly a third of organizations have also already had to deal with complaints or issue violation tickets in this regard. Some organizations also mentioned disturbances (crowding and noises) related to alcohol consumption on pleasure boats.



Half of the organizations report issues of disorderly conduct related to alcohol

“The majority of known complaints are for consumption during ‘boat gatherings on certain lakes.’ ”

- A rural municipality of 2,000 to 9,999 inhabitants

Thus, over 8 out of 10 organizations have regulations on nuisances, quality of life, noise, public order or any other regulation specific to the consumption of alcohol in the public space. When discussed in such regulations, alcohol consumption is usually addressed quite generally.

The most common restrictions are:

- Ban on alcohol consumption on public roads or property (85%);
- Ban on being intoxicated on public property (52%);
- Consumption of alcohol permitted during events, subject to obtaining the consent from the municipal organization (51%);

Organizations that mention not having such regulations include RCMs, which do not have jurisdiction to apply this type of regulation, and municipalities of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. Also, some RCMs indicated they offer standardized regulations to municipalities in their area regarding quality of life, nuisances and public order in the purpose to facilitate regional and provincial police work (Sûreté du Québec).

Despite these restrictions on alcohol consumption, nearly a third of organizations consider the issues of nuisance linked to alcohol consumption to be relevant or a priority.

Zoning of establishments serving alcohol: urban planning tools to use

The municipal sector has several urban planning tools at its disposal to organize its territory and the businesses that operate there. Urban plans, development maps, zoning and usage regulations, conditional uses, minor exemptions and quotas can all be used by municipal organizations to address concerns and issues regarding its population's safety and well-being while taking economic interests into account.

For example, in 2016 the Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough, in Montreal, adopted a zoning by-law to keep fast food establishments away from schools and the heart of residential neighbourhoods for environmental and public health reasons. The legal validity of this regulation, which provides a new use specifically for these fast-food businesses, was confirmed in 2022 by the Supreme Court of Canada²⁸.



The physical availability of alcohol influences consumption behaviours, hence the interest in regulating the locations of points of sale.

Along the same lines, the location of alcohol sales establishments (drinking establishments, bars, clubs, etc.) can be regulated. These establishments exert an attraction and influence on the drinking habits of the local population. Physical accessibility and availability of alcohol in a given area (density, number of points of sale, hours of sale, etc.) have been proven to increase alcohol consumption²⁹ as well as the advertisement exposure^{30 31 32}.

Reducing the number of points of sale (quota), moving them away from certain specific infrastructure and establishing specific rules for these businesses (limits on advertisement displays, hours of sale, etc.) are among the solutions that can be implemented to reduce alcohol-related issues. England and Wales provide examples³³.

Nevertheless, regulation framework must be chosen and implemented judiciously. Indeed, public health policies based on a total ban have demonstrated their ineffectiveness in the same way as complete liberalization (absence of supervision)³⁴.

Among respondents, a majority have a specific zoning for the establishments that serve alcohol:

- **Specific zoning and use for these types of establishments (51%);**
- **Conditional use for these establishments (5%);**
- **Quota for these types of establishments (2%).**

No organization mentioned using relative distancing (minimum required distance) for drinking establishments.

30% of organizations mentioned that they did not have any specific urban planning rules for these types of establishments or that this did not apply to their situation.

Organizations that wish to do so have the possibility of using a greater diversity of urban planning tools allowing precise or conditional choices of locations for drinking establishments. Providing information on the effects of the physical accessibility of alcohol in connection with the urban planning tools that can be used to respond is an option to consider in certain environments.

The thorny question of implementing regulations

When considering regulations, compliance and enforcement are recurring questions for municipal organizations: is a regulation worth adopting if its application cannot be monitored and validated? On the opposite side, what are the impacts of having applications that are too strict?

Monitoring and enforcement is ensured, in many cases, by security and police services such as the *Sûreté du Québec* and local police services. Indeed, apart from urban planning regulations, regulations relating to, or which may affect, alcohol consumption such as nuisance and public order regulations are mainly applied by police or security officers.

This leads many organizations to question the availability of these resources. Also, since nuisance and public order regulations are different from one municipality to another, or from one region to another, it can become hazardous for the provincial police service to know and apply different rules from one territory to another. It can also be difficult to mobilize a provincial police officer for complaints that may be considered “less urgent” such as noise or disturbance caused by alcohol consumption on public roads, for example.



“[...] if we had to rely on the Sûreté du Québec to enforce nuisance or other such regulations on alcohol consumption, it would be complicated. Other municipalities dealing with more alcohol-related problems must be experiencing this.”

- A municipality served by a local municipal patrol

This is the reality for the vast majority of municipal organizations (83%) which are only served by the Sûreté du Québec, and more often for the localities with less than 10,000 inhabitants. Only 16% of organizations also receive the services of a municipal police service, an intermunicipal authority or a local municipal patrol (private or public).

This is also why some RCMs mentioned the use of standardized regulations regarding public order within the region. Such uniform regulations allow the *Sûreté du Québec* to apply the same rule within several municipalities. The practical and coherent aspect of such regulations is obvious, but it nevertheless requires consultation between localities to arrive at a common model adapted to all. Support or tools providing information on the different models and their effects could then be relevant.

The regulatory tools and solutions offered to municipal organizations must take the difficulty of application into account. The preferred solutions are those that municipalities can independently or easily implement or use, without significant reliance on security services for implementation. In this sense, new ways of intervention and prevention in terms of alcohol consumption should be explored.

RESO Police Project in Longueuil: embedded in the community

In 2021, the Longueuil Agglomeration Police Service implemented a community policing project aimed at preventive intervention before emergency calls occur. As part of the **RESO project**, 17 police officers (who do not respond to emergency calls) are deployed in certain sectors in order to build a stronger relationship within the community.

The objective is to reduce emergency calls while getting closer to the population. Attempts are made to defuse problematic situations.

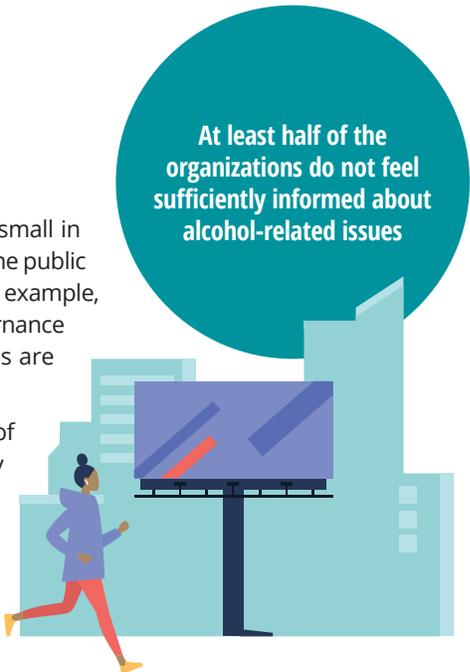
Municipal jurisdiction over alcohol and health issues: a little-known capacity for action

Municipal jurisdiction and powers in matters of health in Quebec may seem small in comparison to those of the provincial government, or even in comparison with the public health powers of municipalities and localities in other provinces. In Ontario, for example, municipalities participate in the financing as well as the management and governance of public health in their region³⁵ and municipal alcohol-related public policies are encouraged³⁶.

Nevertheless, Quebec municipalities have the power to contribute to the health of the population and to the reduction of alcohol-related harm, in complementarity with other authorities.

In this regard, Quebec municipalities have legal^{37 38 39} and political latitude to adopt measures favourable to healthy lifestyles and the creation of safe and healthy environments^{40 41}. Such environments contribute to maintain the well-being and quality of life of their population.

For example, New York City has adopted policies limiting advertising in public spaces from a public health perspective⁴². On this subject, it is possible to consult our **case study** on advertising in public spaces. Quebec municipalities also have similar powers regarding signage and advertising display on their territory⁴³.



At least half of the organizations do not feel sufficiently informed about alcohol-related issues

Ban on advertising billboards: the regulations of Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie and Plateau-Mont-Royal

The Montreal borough of Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie has adopted a **by-law** (01-279-68) aimed at prohibiting and removing all advertising billboards throughout the territory, in 2021, with the aim of limiting visual and light pollution. The regulation is being challenged in court.

In 2010, the Plateau-Mont-Royal borough (Montreal) adopted a similar **regulation** (RCA PMR 2010-10) which was contested in court. The Quebec Court of Appeal, however, confirmed, **in a decision** rendered in 2019, the power to the borough to regulate outdoor advertising displays (billboards or illuminated signs).

Even if adopted with the aim of preserving the visual environment, these policies also have benefits in terms of public health by reducing, among other things, exposure to alcohol advertisements.

However, at least half of the municipal organizations surveyed do not consider themselves sufficiently equipped and informed to address alcohol-related issues. Some organizations seem to be unaware of the scope of municipal powers when it comes to health or simply find the task too ambitious or transversal for their means. **Although all types of organizations mentioned a lack of tools at this level, localities of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants found their means particularly lacking.**

“I believe that this [alcohol-related issues] is more a matter for social services than municipalities. We already have many hats to wear in our organizations.”

– A municipality of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants

This feeling of not being sufficiently equipped to deal with alcohol-related issues is prevalent among municipal stakeholders, regardless of whether they have adopted regulations regarding nuisance and public order. In fact, only 9 organizations out of the 67 who mentioned not feeling sufficiently equipped do not have such regulations.

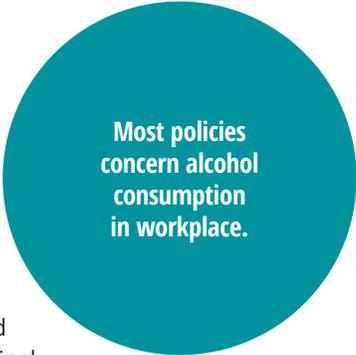
Local and supralocal municipal organizations should be better informed of the powers and means of action at their disposal to better respond to the challenges of alcohol consumption. In this regard, it will also be essential to provide municipal organizations with tools adapted to their reality so that they can implement these actions easily, without significantly adding to their burden.

Policies on alcohol use in public spaces: an underused tool

Adopting orientations, policies, action plans, or strategies is a common practice in the world of municipal organizations. These texts can deal with a variety of subjects such as environment, lifestyle, land use planning, waste management, food supply, road safety and, why not, the consumption and sale of alcoholic beverages.

These non-binding tools can come from local municipalities directly or from a supralocal entity, such as RCMs and metropolitan communities. These texts are good tools to direct and contribute to raising awareness among the population or businesses, or even stating priorities to facilitate obtaining financing. They can directly or indirectly affect health and lifestyle habits, including the consumption, advertising and sale of alcohol in the municipal or regional territory.

Among the 18 RCMs and metropolitan communities that responded, only 6 indicate having adopted, or being part of, a regional policy or strategy addressing alcohol. They mainly concern alcohol consumption in the workplace for the municipal staff (administrative policy regarding occupational health and safety measures).



The Montreal Metropolitan Community and its Metropolitan Housing Policy

As part of its **Metropolitan Housing Policy**, the Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC) believes that it is necessary to establish a sufficient supply of transitional housing in order to adequately support people living with substance use disorder.

The MMC participates in financing social and affordable housing in Greater Montreal and some of the projects and housing can thus be reserved for this clientele.

Similarly, only 39 local municipal entities mentioned having adopted a policy or strategy on alcohol. **Of these, the majority concern alcohol consumption in regard of health and safety at work.**

Ten municipalities are exceptions with the adoption of policies, directives or strategies related to alcohol consumption in public spaces. These policies mainly address:

- The sale or service of alcohol on municipal property or during events under its control;
- Guidelines aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm on its territory;
- The advertising, promotion or sponsorship of alcohol throughout the territory, during events and on municipal property.



10 municipalities have adopted guidelines related to alcohol in public spaces.

Many local and supralocal municipal organizations have adopted action plans, funds, food policies or policies relating to healthy lifestyle habits⁴⁴ or even road safety, **but few address the consumption, promotion or sale of alcohol on their territory or during their events.**

“These responsibilities are municipal, not regional. RCMs do not intervene in this area.”

- RCM -

As for the responding RCMs, **they do not consider themselves directly concerned by alcohol consumption issues, preferring to let local municipalities adopt their own frameworks and policies, while the municipalities themselves say they are sometimes overwhelmed by the task.**

Too few municipal organizations have adopted alcohol policies that go beyond consumption in the workplace, which would be an effective and accessible tool to introduce positive changes and reduce alcohol-related harms⁴⁵.

Adopted locally or supralocally, guidelines on alcohol-related issues can also be introduced through other related policies already adopted (road safety, planning, healthy lifestyle habits, etc.). In order to raise awareness and reduce alcohol-related harm, municipal organizations must be encouraged to introduce such guidelines into their policies.

Sherbrooke and its Municipal policy on youth alcohol use

In 2018, the City of Sherbrooke adopted a **Municipal policy on youth alcohol use**. Developed with the support of the Postsecondary Education Partnership – Alcohol Harms (PEP-AH), **this intersectoral initiative** aims to reduce alcohol-related harm among young people.

As part of this orientation, evaluation and research committees were created to take stock of the situation and awareness-raising actions were proposed, like the “**Garde ça le fun – Keep it social**” university student association campaign and participation in the “**CoDeBars**” initiative.

Identified needs

As shown, municipal challenges related to alcohol consumption are broad and can place undue pressure on municipal governments. These issues can sometimes lead to a disruption of social cohesion and the well-being of the population. It is therefore relevant for municipal organizations to inform and equip themselves with the tools to deal with them. It is also necessary for stakeholders outside the municipal sector to be aware of the issues faced by municipalities linked to alcohol consumption and their effects.

“The [organization] is dealing with several issues related to homelessness, the other levels of government should be more active and better support cities and municipalities.”

- A city of over 100,000 inhabitants

Even though several organizations have mentioned that they do not experience problems related to alcohol, they remain attentive and interested in the information that can be provided related to alcohol consumption in a municipal context. Thus, **77% of organizations say they are “interested” or “maybe interested” in learning more** about the issues surrounding alcohol consumption and the tools available to municipalities to address them.

The organizations then identified the **types of tools** and information that would be most useful to their mission and their work with the population:

- Models of municipal policies or strategies (62%);
- Examples of policies and initiatives (case studies) (53%);
- Awareness tools on alcohol consumption in general (44%);
- Resolution models (43%);
- Impaired driving awareness tools (33%);
- Explanation of laws and jurisprudence (28%);
- Conferences or webinars on alcohol-related issues, risks and harms (19%);
- Infographics and statistical portraits for the municipality or region (1%);

To support municipal organizations in making informed choices and considering all the factors involved, a multitude of tools adapted to the needs and the municipal context can be developed. These tools can help municipal organizations to actively contribute to reducing the harm caused by alcohol in their territory. ■



Conclusion

As partners in creating safe environments that promote quality of life and the adoption of health-promoting behaviours, municipal organizations must be able to rely on appropriate resources, knowledge and tools. Doing so would allow them to effectively ensure the safety and well-being of their populations and implement initiatives, ensuring a response to the issues they experience related to alcohol.

This survey of 135 municipal organizations shed light on their challenges and needs related to alcohol consumption issues. These issues are diverse, ranging from the environmental aspects of waste management to the prevention of impaired driving. This diversity reflects the heterogeneity of municipal environments.

Sometimes far from being at the top of the list of priorities for municipal organizations, which must face many other daily challenges, the impacts of alcohol consumption can nevertheless interfere in several spheres or even exacerbate social issues. Therefore, municipal organizations must be equipped to act quickly and simply.

Strategies to consider



- **Provide information about municipal organizations' capacity for action on alcohol-related issues and creating environments favourable to health and well-being.**

Many municipal organizations, particularly smaller communities (fewer than 2,000 inhabitants), do not consider themselves sufficiently informed and equipped to respond to issues related to alcohol consumption and they wish to learn more. A lack of understanding of the extent of their capacity for action (both local and supralocal) and of the alcohol-related issues was identified as well as a feeling of being overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge.

- **Promote the adoption of policies regarding the consumption and sale of alcohol in public spaces or encourage its inclusion within the framework of related policies and regulations.**

Adopting policies or strategies, or including the alcohol subject within existing policies or by-laws, is a quick and effective way to implement actions aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm. It is then possible to address a multitude of subjects, including the issues of alcohol consumption and the sale of alcoholic products in municipal areas such as outdoor advertisement of alcohol. A better understanding of the issues, solutions and benefits associated with public policies would facilitate and encourage their adoption and the taking of actions.

- **Raise awareness of and respond to the needs of municipal organizations.**

In terms of the harm linked to alcohol consumption, municipalities are called upon to find rapid solutions with few financial and human resources. Few tools are available to them on the matter. It is also an issue among several other priorities for them.

Consequently, the context and diversity of organizational realities must be considered to propose adapted, flexible and simple tools for implementation and application. Expectations must also be realistic so as not to overload administrative or municipal services.

Appendix I : French questionnaire to municipal organizations

Section I : Profil de l'organisation

1. Quel est le nom de votre organisation ?
2. Mon organisation est désignée comme un/une :
 - a. MRC
 - b. Municipalité
 - c. Ville
 - d. Arrondissement
 - e. Communauté métropolitaine
 - f. Paroisse
 - g. Gouvernement régional
 - h. Village
 - i. Administration régionale
 - j. Canton
 - k. Canton uni
 - l. Territoire non organisé
 - m. Agglomération
3. L'organisation municipale ou les municipalités composant l'organisation est/sont située(s) dans quelle(s) région(s) administrative(s) ?
 - a. Bas-Saint-Laurent (01)
 - b. Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (02)
 - c. Capitale-Nationale (03)
 - d. Mauricie (04)
 - e. Estrie (05)
 - f. Montréal (06)
 - g. Outaouais (07)
 - h. Abitibi-Témiscamingue (08)
 - i. Côte-Nord (09)
 - j. Nord-du-Québec (10)
 - k. Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (11)
 - l. Chaudière-Appalaches (12)
 - m. Laval (13)
 - n. Lanaudière (14)
 - o. Laurentides (15)
 - p. Montérégie (16)
 - q. Centre-du-Québec (17)
4. L'organisation est considérée comme étant :
 - a. Un centre de population (ou milieu urbain et semi-urbain)
 - b. Une région rurale
 - c. Autres
5. L'organisation est composée de combien d'habitants (selon le plus récent décret de population du Québec) ?
 - a. Moins de 2 000
 - b. Entre 2 000 et 9 999
 - c. Entre 10 000 et 24 999
 - d. Entre 25 000 et 99 999
 - e. 100 000 et plus
 - f. Non applicable

Section II : Encadrement municipal actuel

6. Est-ce que l'organisation a un règlement, toujours en vigueur, sur les nuisances, le bruit ou les désordres publics ou tout autre règlement touchant la consommation d'alcool (à l'exception des règles de zonage liées aux commerces) ?
- Oui
 - Non
 - Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre

POSER SI 6 = A

7. Le règlement de nuisances, bruits ou désordres publics de l'organisation aborde le/les sujet(s) suivant(s) (cochez tout ce qui s'applique) :
- Interdiction de consommation d'alcool sur la voie publique (domaine public)
 - Autorisation de consommation d'alcool dans les parcs sans restriction
 - Autorisation de consommation d'alcool dans un parc à l'occasion d'un repas/pique-nique
 - Autorisation de consommation d'alcool dans des ères publiques prévues à cet effet
 - Autorisation de consommation d'alcool lors d'événements suivant une autorisation de l'organisation municipale
 - Restrictions de consommation d'alcool dans les parcs à certaines périodes (heures)
 - Interdiction d'être ivre sur le domaine public
 - Autres. Précisez :
 - Non applicable

8. L'organisation a-t-elle adopté ou est-elle partie à une politique ou stratégie en matière d'alcool ?
- Oui
 - Non
 - Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre

POSER SI 8 = A

9. La politique en matière d'alcool aborde le ou les sujets suivants :
- La vente ou le service d'alcool sur ses propriétés ou dans des lieux ou lors d'événements sous son contrôle
 - La consommation d'alcool dans le milieu de travail (pour les employés municipaux)
 - Des orientations visant la réduction des méfaits liés à l'alcool sur le territoire
 - La publicité, la promotion ou la commandite d'alcool sur l'ensemble du territoire
 - La publicité, la promotion ou la commandite d'alcool dans les propriétés, lieux ou événements sous contrôle de l'organisation
 - Autres. Précisez :
 - Non applicable
 - Ne sais pas ou préfère ne pas répondre

10. L'organisation réglemente-t-elle, sur le plan urbanistique, l'emplacement des établissements servant ou vendant de l'alcool ? Sélectionnez, le ou les cas applicables :
- Zonage spécifique pour les établissements servant de l'alcool (débits de boisson : bars, clubs)
 - Contingentement des établissements débits de boisson
 - Usage conditionnel pour les établissements débits de boisson
 - Éloignement relatif pour les établissements débits de boisson
 - Autres. Précisez :
 - Non applicable
 - Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre

11. En matière de services de sécurité publique, qui dessert le territoire de l'organisation (plusieurs réponses possibles) ?

- a. Un corps de police municipal
- b. Une patrouille municipale (publique ou privée)
- c. La Sûreté du Québec
- d. Un corps de police autochtone
- e. Non applicable
- f. Autres. Précisez :

Section III : Nuisances ou désordres observés liés à l'alcool

12. L'organisation a-t-elle déjà noté, reçu des plaintes ou émis des constats d'infraction en lien avec la consommation d'alcool comme (cochez tout ce qui s'applique) :

- a. À l'exclusion du volume de la musique, des problèmes ou plaintes liés au bruit émanant d'établissements de bars, clubs ou restaurants
- b. Problèmes, plaintes ou infractions liées à la consommation d'alcool dans les parcs
- c. Problèmes ou plaintes liées à la consommation sur les voies publiques (par ex. tapage, bruit, etc.)
- d. Problèmes ou plaintes liés aux matières résiduelles (canettes, bouteilles ou contenants d'alcool, etc.) sur le domaine public
- e. Autres. Précisez :
- f. Aucune de ces réponses/aucun problème noté
- g. Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre

13. L'organisation a-t-elle déjà noté ou observé les comportements suivants liés à la consommation d'alcool sur le territoire municipal (cochez tout ce qui s'applique):

- a. Désordres, violences ou enjeux de sécurité lors d'événements
- b. Désordres, violences ou enjeux de sécurité dans les transports collectifs
- c. Désordres, violences ou enjeux de sécurité sur la voie publique
- d. Conduite automobile avec facultés affaiblies par l'alcool
- e. Troubles de consommation (dépendance) au sein de sa population
- f. Autres. Précisez :
- g. Aucune de ces réponses/aucun problème noté
- h. Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre

14. Parmi les enjeux suivants, lesquels considérez-vous prioritaires ou pertinents à votre situation municipale :

- a. Plaintes liées au bruit émanant d'établissements de bars, clubs ou restaurants
- b. Plaintes ou infractions liées à la consommation d'alcool dans les parcs
- c. Plaintes ou infractions liées à la consommation d'alcool sur les voies publiques (par ex. tapage, bruit, etc.)
- d. Problèmes liés aux matières résiduelles (canettes, bouteilles, etc.) sur le domaine public
- e. Désordre, violence ou enjeux de sécurité lors d'événements
- f. Désordres, violences ou enjeux de sécurité dans les transports collectifs
- g. Enjeux de consommation chez des jeunes ou des étudiants
- h. Conduite automobile avec facultés affaiblies par l'alcool
- i. Troubles de consommation chez les personnes itinérantes
- j. Troubles de consommation chez la population autochtone du territoire
- k. Troubles de consommation (dépendance) importants au sein de la population
- l. Autres. Précisez :
- m. Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre

15. Considérez-vous que l'organisation possède les outils (légaux, ressources humaines, etc.) et informations nécessaires pour répondre aux enjeux de la consommation d'alcool ?

- a. Oui
- b. Non
- c. Préfère ne pas répondre/ne sais pas

16. Aimerez-vous en apprendre davantage sur les enjeux de la consommation d'alcool et les outils à la disposition des municipalités pour y répondre ?

- a. Oui
- b. Non
- c. Préfère ne pas répondre/ne sais pas

17. En lien avec la question précédente, quel(s) type(s) d'outil(s) ou quelles informations vous seraient les plus utiles (cochez ce qui s'applique) ?

- a. Exemples de politiques et d'initiatives (études de cas)
- b. Modèles de résolution
- c. Modèles de politiques ou de stratégie municipale
- d. Vulgarisation des lois (provinciales ou fédérales) et de la jurisprudence
- e. Conférences/webinaires sur les enjeux, risques et méfaits de l'alcool
- f. Outils de sensibilisation sur la consommation d'alcool en général
- g. Outils de sensibilisation à la conduite avec facultés affaiblies
- h. Ne sais pas/préfère ne pas répondre
- i. Autres. Précisez :

Section finale

18. Désirez-vous recevoir les conclusions découlant du présent sondage ?

- a. Oui. Merci de nous indiquer vos coordonnées :
- b. Non

19. Accepteriez-vous que l'on vous contacte sur vos réponses afin que l'on puisse bonifier nos observations et améliorer les outils proposés ? Une telle entrevue ne durerait pas plus de 15 minutes.

- a. Oui. Merci de nous laisser vos coordonnées ou de celle de la personne à joindre :
- b. Non

20. Commentaires

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