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Municipalities Could Help Reduce Harms to Youth from Alcohol

Report from PEP-AH and CCSA Shows Promising Way Forward

Ottawa, May 9, 2018 — Community collaboration could be key to addressing devastating harms among youth from alcohol use. This is one conclusion of a report released today by the Postsecondary Education Partnership on Alcohol Harms (PEP-AH) and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA).

The report outlines the experience of Sherbrooke, a city in Quebec that is home to five postsecondary institutions and where students make up 17 percent of the population for eight months of the year. Sherbrooke, like many other campus towns, has been grappling with acute harms to youth and the city from alcohol use. Statistics reveal that every two days a youth aged 12–24 years old visited a Sherbrooke hospital for an alcohol-related cause.

In response, key players in the community came together to **build** a partnership, **understand** in depth the harms and where they happened in the city, and **plan** a local group response. “It seems so simple: **Build. Understand. Plan.** When we saw that collaborative thinking emerging in Sherbrooke, we realized we were witnessing the early stages for potentially **the** key to reducing harms,” said Catherine Paradis, co-chair of PEP-AH, Senior Researcher and Policy Analyst with CCSA and primary author of the report. “Sherbrooke is in the early stages of its work, but already we see that collective, collaborative action could be the approach used across Canada to reduce harms related to youth alcohol use.”

“Communities across the country with postsecondary institutions have been struggling to contain the harms of alcohol,” added Scott Duguay, co-chair of PEP-AH and Associate Vice-President, Enrolment Management, St. Thomas University in New Brunswick. “Group action has always been more effective than individual action. I call on communities across Canada to start going down the same path, and I’m confident we’ll see a turning point in responsible alcohol use amongst youth.”

In Sherbrooke, a committee of community partners came together and used the PEP-AH framework — an evidence-based framework that gives high-level advice across five strategic areas — to organize its work, put together the right partnership and analyse the situation from a broad point of view. The committee then identified key indicators, including alcohol use, the legal and health consequences of drinking, and the physical and economic availability of alcohol in the community. Finally, the committee identified preventive measures going forward in terms of clinical health services, information and education, community actions and availability of alcohol. The committee is now poised, together with community partners, to deal more effectively than ever with alcohol harms.

PEP-AH is a partnership among Canadian universities and colleges, Universities Canada and CCSA, as well as postsecondary students, staff and faculty. PEP-AH aims to reduce harms related to alcohol consumption.

For more information, view the [full](#) report on www.pepah.ca or www.ccsa.ca.

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