

SECOND FORUM ON THE
National Framework for Action

to Reduce the Harms Associated
with Alcohol and Other Drugs and
Substances in Canada

SUMMARY REPORT | JULY 2008

Introduction

The National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada (National Framework) resulted from cross-Canada consultations with more than 400 representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations and other key stakeholders during 2004 and 2005.

Subsequently, 100 stakeholders met at the first National Framework Forum in Montreal in 2005 and defined the vision, principles, goals and 13 priorities needed to reduce the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs and substances. The First Edition of the National Framework was released in early 2006 and sets out a process to create an inclusive national approach to substance abuse in Canada.

The second National Framework Forum was hosted by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), with financial support from Health Canada, on May 29 and 30, 2008, in Toronto. The three (3) objectives of the Forum were

1. To review progress to date on the National Framework as a whole and accomplishments on the various priorities,
2. To identify next steps on existing priorities and to identify new and emerging priorities and their implementation process,
3. To seek input and commitment on managing the way forward.

These objectives were designed to foster discussion on (a) gauging the influence of the Framework in providing impetus for action by partners on the Framework's priorities, (b) promoting new and continuing commitment by Framework partners to develop and implement strategies to address the Framework's priorities, and (c) identifying challenges and creative solutions for moving forward.

This Summary Report of the second Forum on the National Framework provides highlights of the event and decisions made by approximately 70 representatives from the key stakeholder groups across Canada, including all levels of government, national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Aboriginal service organizations, consumers, academics and private industry. The "As Recorded Report" from the Forum facilitator is available on the National Framework website (www.nationalframework-cadrenational.ca).

Summary of Highlights of the Forum

Forum participants deemed that the National Framework is extremely important to framing the context and responses to problematic substance use in Canada and that the Framework's vision, principles, goals and priorities remain relevant and important to reducing the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs and substances.

National Framework partners have come a long way in the past three years with many successes and accomplishments. The Forum showcased these accomplishments, including the development and implementation of the recommendations of the National Alcohol Strategy and activities to support Workforce Development, Treatment and Youth priorities. Linkages among priorities were also identified. Further, Forum participants reaffirmed their collective support for the ongoing process, identified next steps for each of the existing and emerging priorities, and agreed that CCSA would continue to perform a Secretariat role relating to National Framework activities and facilitating partners' uptake of Framework priorities.

The National Framework continues to be a uniquely Canadian approach to collaboration, partnership and commitment to action to reduce the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs and substances in Canada. It brings together many partners from all levels of government, NGOs, Aboriginal and Inuit service organizations, people who currently use drugs or have used drugs in the past, and the private sector.

Collaborative action by Framework partners is needed to support next steps on existing priorities and newly identified ones. While partners are actively leading and participating in eight Framework priorities, five still need leadership and participants to lead and define a strategy and recommendations for implementation.

Continued commitment and enthusiasm from Framework partners will help mobilize multi-sectoral national action to reduce the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs and substances in Canada, thereby making a significant difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

Objective 1: Progress and accomplishments to date

Progress and accomplishments since the release of the National Framework in 2006 were demonstrated in the results of an EKOS online survey to examine stakeholders' perceptions of the National Framework, the linkages among Framework priorities, the linkages with other Strategies such as the Toronto Drug Strategy and the Nova Scotia Alcohol Strategy, and the successful implementation activities around four of the priorities over the past three years: the National Alcohol Strategy, the National Treatment Strategy Working Group, the National Advisory Group on Workforce Development, and the Youth Working Group.

Objective 2: Next steps on existing priorities and identification of new and emerging priorities

Organizations have committed to leading the development and/or implementation of strategies for the following eight (8) priorities: Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms; Preventing Problematic Use of Pharmaceuticals; Addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; Sustaining Workforce Development; Improving Quality, Accessibility and Range of Options to Treat Harmful Substance Use including Substance Use Disorders; Focusing on Children and Youth; Supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People in Addressing their Needs; and Reaching Out to Canada's North.

Discussion is underway with organizations to develop strategies for the following five (5) priorities: Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Substance Use; Addressing Enforcement Issues; Implementing a National Research Agenda and Facilitating Knowledge Transfer; Modernizing Legislation, Regulatory and Policy Frameworks; and Responding to Offender-Related Issues.

Next steps on existing priorities

Each Forum participant chose a specific National Framework priority that matched her/his area of expertise/interest and met in small priority-specific groups to discuss desired outcomes, how to build momentum and what needs to happen next on each priority, and to identify new or emerging priorities. The following section provides a summary of the points raised in each small group, as defined in the "As Recorded" Report of the Forum facilitator. These points will be considered by the Working Groups as the strategies unfold.

Priority 1: Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Problematic Substance Use

Forum participants indicated that the next steps should focus on facilitating a national public dialogue on the issues of awareness and understanding, including implementation of a public education campaign. They also recommended that leadership could come from Forum participants, such as national NGOs, community-based NGOs, the Mental Health Commission, the Canadian Public Health Association and CCSA.

Priorities 2 and 5: Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms, and Addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

The participants agreed that the two priorities of Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms and Addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder shared many of the same issues and strategies, and they recommended that the next steps include promotion of national low-risk drinking guidelines to the general public and groups involved in chronic disease, development of parent education strategies, and the formation of a steering committee to oversee implementation of the National Alcohol Strategy. They also agreed that CCSA would continue to provide the Secretariat role for supporting National Alcohol Strategy activities, facilitating partner uptake of recommendations, and engaging partners to form a steering committee.

Priority 3: Preventing Problematic Use of Pharmaceuticals

Next steps recommended by Forum participants to prevent problematic use of pharmaceuticals included tracking and monitoring use of pharmaceuticals, devising solutions to drug diversion with pharmaceutical companies, and developing plans to increase awareness of preventing problematic use of pharmaceuticals. CCSA will co-chair a working group with other government and/or NGO representatives (to be determined).

Priority 4: Addressing Enforcement Issues

The participants recommended that Public Safety Canada lead a working group to create and/or find and implement prevention models for application to local issues that will lead to effective interventions by police and partners.

Priority 6: Sustaining Workforce Development

The participants agreed that CCSA would continue to co-chair the National Advisory Group on Workforce Development (NAGWD) with Nova Scotia Addiction Services. They also decided that the next steps for implementing the Workforce Development strategy should focus on identifying resources and process to continue the work of

NAGWD, and maintain, promote and extend the Canadian Network of Substance Abuse and Allied Professionals website.

Priority 7: Improving Quality, Accessibility and Range of Options to Treat Harmful Substance Use including Substance Use Disorders

The Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, represented by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services, and CCSA will continue to promote the implementation of the National Treatment Strategy. Next steps in this process will include investing in a minimum standard of care and a comprehensive and integrated tiered system of supports and services, and building and strengthening capacity among stakeholders.

Priority 8: Implementing a National Research Agenda and Facilitating Knowledge Transfer

The participants recommended that CCSA lead the implementation of a strategy that would include expansion of the existing researcher database, identification of knowledge transfer brokers across Canada, convening of a meeting to bring the brokers together, and connecting workforce developers with training institutions.

Priority 9: Modernizing Legislation, Regulatory and Policy Frameworks

Although no specific leadership was recommended by Forum participants, the next steps for implementing activities to support this priority included funding by CCSA, and/or some other independent organization, of studies of the cost-effectiveness and economic, social and health consequences of current criminal law-based approaches to drugs. Other recommendations included encouraging public discourse through the media and ensuring correct messages.

Priority 10: Focusing on Children and Youth

Forum participants agreed that CCSA will provide secretariat support and lead the National Advisory Group on Youth Prevention and that youth need to be linked with all priorities of the National Framework.

Priorities 11 and 12: Reaching out to Canada's North and Supporting First Nations, Inuit and Métis People in Addressing their Needs

The participants agreed that the two priorities of Reaching Out to Canada's North and Supporting First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Addressing their Needs shared many issues and strategies and that the two priorities may potentially be combined into a single

strategy. They recommended that the next steps include pursuing a First Nations, Inuit and Métis consultation process through a national forum workshop with the objectives of setting and maintaining a national agenda and establishing leadership within the community. Further, a First Nations, Inuit and Métis lens that encompasses trauma and social determinants of health should be applied to all 13 priorities. CCSA will support the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the process of determining appropriate ways of implementing these two priorities.

Priority 13: Responding to Offender-Related Issues

Participants agreed that a workshop should be convened to determine offender-related issues. Participants at the workshop would include representatives from government jurisdictions, NGOs, inmates and education institutions who work with correctional institutions. Correctional Service of Canada was suggested as a leader of this priority.

Identification of emerging priorities

The following eight (8) new and emerging priorities were raised and will be reviewed by a proposed National Framework steering committee to be formed in the next few months:

- Connections between alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs
- Use of non-beverage alcohol
- Concurrent disorders
- The range of inhalants
- Harm reduction strategy
- Trauma, abuse and family violence (related to addictions)
- Reduction of stigmatization of drug users
- Other social determinants

Further, participants stressed the need to apply the National Framework principle of "those most affected are meaningfully involved", as well as a gender lens and a First Nations, Inuit and Métis lens to all recommendations and strategies. The following populations should be considered in all priorities: women, seniors, children of prisoners, immigrants and the homeless.

Objective 3: Consensus on managing the way forward

The results of an EKOS online survey and the consensus of participants at the second National Framework Forum both confirm that CCSA has the appropriate mandate and corporate commitment to the National Framework to continue to "act as a mobilizer and leader to ensure that work on each priority moves forward"—that is, by continuing to

provide Secretariat support for National Framework activities and facilitating partners' uptake of the 13 priorities. Further, participants recommended that leadership of the National Framework be shared with a Steering Committee that will include chairs of priority working groups and reflect the membership of those working groups, including NGOs, government agencies and consumers.

In the next six (6) months, CCSA will request that all Forum participants engage in organizing the National Framework Steering Committee with multi-sectoral and regional representation from federal, provincial and territorial governments, the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, co-chairs of the priority working groups, people who use or have used drugs and/or alcohol, national NGOs, and the private sector. CCSA will also prepare the draft Terms of Reference for the National Framework Steering Committee and assist with convening the first Steering Committee meeting to review the management of the priorities and plan for the third Forum at an appropriate time.

Contact Information

For further information on the Second National Framework Forum or the National Framework, please contact:

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National Framework

For Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada

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