



CONSULTATION PAPER ON WELLNESS IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

November 2023



LIVE WELL PEI

together we can

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INTRODUCTION

Island residents value wellness and want to live healthier lives. To empower Island residents in improving their health, the Department of Health and Wellness and PEI's Chief Public Health Office is developing a 5-year provincial wellness action plan under the brand LIVE WELL PEI with the tagline: Together We Can. By bolding the letters "WE" and emphasizing "Together We Can" the LIVE WELL PEI brand reminds us that wellness in Prince Edward Island can only be achieved when we all work together. We need your input on a LIVE WELL PEI action plan that will collectively empower Island residents to achieve our wellness goals. This consultation paper provides an overview of wellness in PEI, sets wellness goals for Island residents, proposes actions to reach these wellness goals, and seeks your input on these and other actions to be included in the LIVE WELL PEI action plan.

WHAT IS WELLNESS?

A healthy population is essential to a thriving and prosperous Prince Edward Island. To support the health of Island residents, PEI needs a strong healthcare system that provides person-centered care for people who are sick. However, healthcare systems are limited in their ability to prevent sickness and to keep Island residents healthy. The best way to improve the health of a population is to prevent disease and injury from occurring by building health resiliency in PEI communities. **The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.¹ Well-being or Wellness is an upstream, preventive, disease-free concept that supports healthy, resilient populations** that are less reliant on provider-centered care.² Becoming and staying well in PEI requires our collective provincial effort to prevent and slow the onset of disease and injury. By working together to focus on wellness and reduce our health risks, Island residents can stay healthier for longer.

What does it mean to focus on wellness? Most illness, disability, and death in PEI is caused by four chronic disease clusters: type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic pulmonary disease (e.g., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD), and cancer. The number of Island residents with these chronic diseases is expected to increase as our population ages and increases. Fortunately, many of these chronic diseases can be prevented or delayed by adopting healthier lifestyles. **Similar to other Canadian provinces and territories, data in PEI shows that four health behaviours contribute significantly to our rates of chronic disease: physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, tobacco use, and harmful use of alcohol.** Taking steps towards wellness in PEI means enabling Island residents to improve these health behaviours and reduce their health risk.

¹ Leppo K, Ollila E, Pena S, Wismar M, Cook S. 2023. [Health in All Policies-Seizing Opportunities, Implementing Policies.](#)

² Public Health Agency of Canada. 2023. [What is the Population Health Approach.](#)

APPROACH TO WELLNESS IN PEI

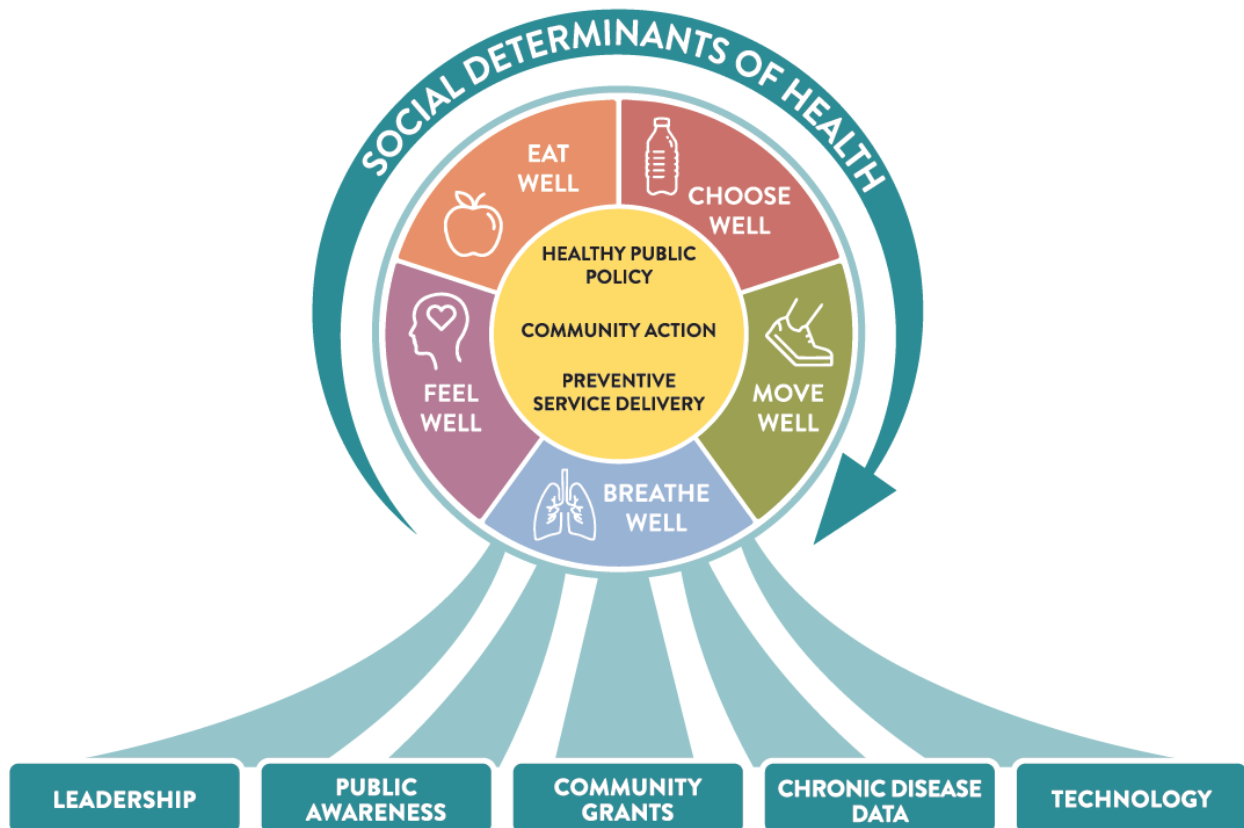
Health surveys show that Island residents value wellness and want to make healthy choices regarding physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, tobacco use, and harmful use of alcohol. However, lifestyle change is difficult. Change is particularly hard for individuals who struggle with social factors such as low income and unemployment, lack of education, poor social support networks, and unhealthy physical environments. **These factors are known as the social determinants of health (SDH).** Reports from PEI's Chief Public Health Office have shown that chronic disease risk is highest among Island residents with poor SDH. To address the SDH and improve Island health for all, it's important to realize that many determinants arise from outside the health sector. **Therefore, our approach to wellness in PEI requires collaboration among many health and non-health sectors and stakeholders** which include provincial government, communities, municipalities, service providers, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector. Working together, our goal is to empower Island residents to make healthy choices — to make the healthy choice, the easy choice.

Three approaches have been shown to empower individuals to make healthy choices: Healthy Public Policy, Community Action, and Preventive Service Delivery.³ Healthy Public Policy creates social and physical environments that support wellness (e.g., bike lanes, healthy school lunch programs, smoke-free legislation, minimum age of purchase for alcohol products). Community Action empowers individuals, groups, and organizations to lead wellness initiatives in their community (e.g., wellness grant programs, walking clubs, food skills and nutrition education, smoking cessation support groups, social media campaigns to reduce the harmful use of alcohol). Preventive Service Delivery promotes wellness through education and programs or services. For instance, preventive service delivery may occur directly through a wellness program (e.g., prescription for exercise program) or indirectly during a regular visit to a health or social services provider (e.g., screening for high-risk alcohol use during a primary care visit).

³ Ottawa Charter, www.who.int/teams/health-promotion/enhanced-wellbeing/first-global-conference

LIVE WELL PEI

LIVE WELL PEI is a wellness brand and framework developed by PEI’s Chief Public Health Office in consultation with community and government stakeholders. The **LIVE WELL PEI** graphic below summarizes the **LIVE WELL PEI** approach to wellness. **LIVE WELL PEI** addresses the four health behaviours: physical activity (**MOVE WELL**), healthy eating (**EAT WELL**), quitting tobacco use (**BREATHE WELL**), and reducing the harmful use of alcohol (**CHOOSE WELL**). Mental Wellness (**FEEL WELL**) is an additional component of **LIVE WELL PEI** led by the PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being⁴ and is not part of this consultation. **LIVE WELL PEI** addresses these four behaviours using three approaches: Healthy Public Policy, Community Action, and Preventive Service Delivery. Leadership, public awareness, community grants, chronic disease data, and technology are required to enable the three approaches. Lastly, actions to improve wellness must take into consideration the social determinants of health.



⁴ allianceformentalwellbeing.com

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

We want to hear from you! The purpose of this consultation paper is to engage Island residents in developing a 5-year provincial wellness action plan under the brand **LIVE WELL PEI**. For each health behaviour a 5-year provincial goal has been set:

| Health Behaviour | 5- Year Provincial Goal |
|---|---|
| BREATHE WELL Quitting tobacco use | Empower 6,000 more Island residents to BREATHE WELL by living tobacco-free ⁵ |
| CHOOSE WELL Reducing harmful use of alcohol | Empower 7,000 more Island residents to CHOOSE WELL by reducing their alcohol use ⁶ |
| EAT WELL Healthy eating | Empower 18,000 more Island residents to EAT WELL by adopting a healthier diet ⁷ |
| MOVE WELL Physical activity | Empower 20,000 more Island residents to MOVE WELL by meeting physical activity guidelines ⁸ |

To achieve these goals, proposed actions have been developed for each of the four health behaviours. These proposed actions were developed using the best available evidence under the three approaches of Healthy Public Policy, Community Action, and Preventive Service Delivery.

We want your input on these proposed actions to improve wellness in Prince Edward Island. We also want to hear what other actions should be considered to reach our provincial wellness goals. Your input will be used to inform the development of a 5-year **LIVE WELL PEI** wellness action plan.

⁵ 6,000 Island residents represents one-third of PEI’s 18,000 daily smokers who will be empowered to quit tobacco use. This is equivalent to a reduction in PEI’s smoking prevalence from 13.4% to 7%.

⁶ 7,000 Island residents represents 22% of PEI’s 32,000 residents who drink heavily who will be empowered to **CHOOSE WELL** by no longer drinking heavily. This is equivalent to a reduction in PEI’s heavy drinking prevalence from 23.8% to 15%.

⁷ Healthy eating is estimated using the % of Island residents 12 years and older consuming five or more servings of fruit and vegetables per day. 18,000 Island residents empowered to **EAT WELL** represents an increase in this measure from 28.5% to 33%.

⁸ Physical activity is estimated using the % of Island residents 12 years and older meeting the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. 20,000 Island residents empowered to **MOVE WELL** represents an increase in this measure from 48.3% to 50%.

BREATHE WELL



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THEME 1: BREATHE WELL



5-YEAR PROVINCIAL GOAL

Empower 6,000 more Island residents to BREATHE WELL by living tobacco-free⁹

OVERVIEW

Tobacco use remains Prince Edward Island’s leading preventable cause of illness and death. Smoking causes and contributes to many health conditions¹⁰ and most smokers die about 10 years earlier than non-smokers.¹¹ Notably, 90% of lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) deaths are associated with tobacco use.¹² **In 2020, tobacco use in PEI led to 265 deaths, 550 years of productive life lost, 1,036 emergency department visits, and 885 hospital admissions.**¹³ This health and social impact had an economic impact of \$67 million dollars due to healthcare costs and lost productivity. Most recent estimates show that daily smoking was higher in PEI than in Canada with approximately 18,000 (13.4%) Island residents aged 12 years and older using tobacco daily. Daily smoking was more common among males and appears to be more common among individuals living in rural communities or more highly deprived neighborhoods.

To reduce the impact of tobacco use in PEI, we need to prevent Island residents from beginning to use tobacco products while helping those who do use tobacco products to quit. Prevention focuses on youth since most Island residents begin to use tobacco and vaping products in their teens. Today, youth vaping is popular with 18% of Island students in grades 7 to 12 using an e-cigarette in 2023. This percentage increases from 6% among students in grade 7 to 35% among those in grade 12.¹⁴ Nicotine vaping carries its own health risks and is contributing to a new generation of Island residents who are becoming nicotine dependent. Once an individual becomes nicotine-dependent, quitting tobacco use or vaping is not easy. Though many quit attempts are unsuccessful, the evidence shows that pharmaceutical and counseling support can triple the chances of quitting successfully.¹⁵

⁹ 6,000 Island residents represents one-third of PEI’s 18,000 daily smokers who will be empowered to quit tobacco use. This is equivalent to a reduction in PEI’s smoking prevalence from 13.4% to 7%.

¹⁰ Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK310413/>

¹¹ CDC Tobacco-Related Mortality, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/tobacco_related_mortality

¹² John Hopkins Medicine, [Smoking and Respiratory Diseases | Johns Hopkins Medicine](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/smoking-and-respiratory-diseases)

¹³ Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms data tool, <https://csuch.ca/explore-the-data/>

¹⁴ Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drugs Survey, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey.html>

¹⁵ Health Canada, [Quitting smoking: How to quit - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/quitting-smoking/how-to-quit.html)

CURRENT WORK

PEI is a national leader in tobacco and vaping control with an approach focused on **protection, prevention, and cessation** led by PEI's Chief Public Health Office.

- **Protection** is accomplished through education and enforcement related to PEI's Tobacco and Electronic Smoking Devices Sales and Access Act and Smoke-free Places Act.¹⁶ In 2020, PEI became the first province or territory in Canada to increase the legal age to purchase tobacco or electronic smoking devices (ESDs) to 21 years of age. In 2021, PEI banned flavoured ESDs and permitted ESDs to only be sold in specialty tobacconist stores.
- **Prevention** occurs through provincial public awareness campaigns such as Take a Breath¹⁷ and school-based prevention campaigns.
- **Cessation** is supported through PEI's Smoking Cessation program which was introduced in 2019.¹⁸ The program covers 100% of the cost of nicotine replacement therapy (i.e., nicotine gum, lozenges, patches, and inhaler) or smoking cessation prescription medications. To date, over 3,500 Island residents have enrolled in the program. A recent evaluation showed a quit rate of 28% as well as a reduction of 7 fewer cigarettes per day for those who did not quit.¹⁹ In 2023, PEI enhanced the program to become one of the first jurisdictions to offer vaping cessation.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The following actions are proposed to achieve PEI's five-year goal of empowering 6,000 more Island residents to **BREATHE WELL** by living tobacco-free.

1. Lead the way towards a Tobacco-Free Generation (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)

Given the societal impact of tobacco and the continued uptake of tobacco use among youth, there has been growing interest in laws that would prohibit the next generation from purchasing tobacco. Tobacco-Free Generation (TFG) proposals no longer allow tobacco to be sold to individuals born after a certain year. For example, New Zealand has adopted a TFG approach such that starting in 2027 no one born after Jan. 1, 2009 will be able to legally purchase cigarettes. The effect of a TFG approach is to stop the next generation of youth from purchasing tobacco products. This approach recognizes that most smokers begin in their teens and preventing youth initiation is the key to ending the tobacco epidemic. TFG proposals do not impact adult smokers and are focused on tobacco rather than vaping. This action proposes that, starting in a certain year, PEI would no longer allow the sale of tobacco products to the next generation of Island residents.

Resources

- [The tobacco-free generation proposal](#)
- [New Zealand passes world-first tobacco law to ban smoking for next generation](#)

¹⁶ PEI Tobacco and Electronic Sales and Access Act, <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/selling-tobacco-and-electronic-smoking-devices-vaping-products>

PEI Smoke-free Places Act, <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/smoke-free-places>

¹⁷ PEI Chief Public Health Office [Take a Breath campaign](#)

¹⁸ PEI Smoking Cessation Program, <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/smoking-cessation>

¹⁹ PEI Smoking Cessation Evaluation Report, <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/pei-smoking-cessation-evaluation-report-2022>

2. **Permit tobacco to be sold only in tobacconist shops (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)**

In 2021, in an effort to curb nicotine vaping particularly among Island youth, legislative changes were made to permit electronic smoking devices and e-liquids to be sold only in tobacconist shops. A tobacconist shop is an age-restricted location whose primary business is the retail sale of tobacco and/or electronic smoking devices. The same approach could be taken for tobacco products with the goal of decreasing youth access to tobacco products and increasing compliance with PEI's minimum age of purchase. This action proposes to permit tobacco to be sold only in tobacconist shops. This proposal would only apply to new tobacco retailers, not current tobacco retailers.

Resources

- i. [Selling Tobacco and Electronic Smoking Devices \(Vaping Products\)](#)

3. **Prevent youth initiation of tobacco and vaping (COMMUNITY ACTION)**

Most tobacco use and vaping begins in the teen years. Preventing youth from starting to use tobacco and vaping products requires prevention messaging in school as well as broader community settings. This action would increase prevention efforts in Island school settings as well as expand community-based messaging tailored to youth.

Resources

- i. See "Empowering Change" section of this consultation paper for proposed investments in public awareness campaigns including youth tobacco and vaping prevention

4. **Expand the PEI Smoking Cessation program (PREVENTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY)**

The PEI Smoking Cessation Program was launched in 2019. The program covers 100% of the cost of nicotine replacement therapy (i.e., nicotine gum, lozenges, patches, and inhaler) or cessation prescription medications for Island residents who wish to quit. In 2022, two cessation support programs were launched to assist employees and youth who want to quit smoking and vaping. Recommendations were also made to expand the cessation program. This action would advance these recommendations including: increasing intake sites / providers including community pharmacies, integrating the program into health and social service settings as well as workplaces, schools and youth-serving organizations, investing in program support and promotion, and reaching priority groups.

Resources

- i. [PEI Smoking Cessation Program](#)
- ii. [PEI Smoking Cessation Program Evaluation](#)
- iii. [Working Together: Quitting Together and Quit Your Way](#)

CHOOSE WELL



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THEME 2: CHOOSE WELL



5-YEAR PROVINCIAL GOAL

Empower 7,000 more Island residents to CHOOSE WELL by reducing their alcohol use²⁰

OVERVIEW

Harmful use of alcohol is a leading cause of preventable illness and death in PEI. It is associated with more than 200 disease and injury conditions including cancer (e.g., liver, breast, colorectal), liver disease, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes.²¹ In 2020/2021 Island residents 15 years and older consumed the equivalent of 475 standard drinks of alcohol per person per year.²² **In 2020, this level of alcohol consumption in PEI led to 135 deaths, 1,334 years of productive life lost, 6,003 emergency department visits, and 776 hospital admissions.**²⁰ This had an economic impact of \$37 million dollars in healthcare costs, \$67 million dollars in costs due to lost productivity, and \$20 million dollars in costs related to criminal justice.²³ **In 2022, 50% of PEI students in grades 7 to 12 reported using alcohol in the last 12 months with 25% of these students reporting they binge drank (5 or more drinks per occasion).**²⁴ As age and grade increased, the consumption of alcohol increased.²⁵ Despite strict impaired driving laws, in 2019, PEI had the highest rate of impaired driving among the provinces.²⁶

To reduce the impact of harmful alcohol use in PEI, we need to reduce the number of Island residents that consume alcohol above low-risk drink limits. In 2023, new Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health (CGAH) was released.²⁷ Based on the latest evidence regarding alcohol and health risk, the CGAH weekly drink limits are much lower than previous guidelines: 1-2 standard drinks for low-risk alcohol consumption, 3-6 standard drinks for moderate risk, and 7 or more standard drinks for high risk. The CGAH states that the more you drink per week, the greater the risk of harm. **The overarching message of the CGAH is “drinking less is better”.** Many Island residents want to drink less, however, our ability to do so is heavily influenced by the culture of consumption in PEI and alcohol policies that shape how consumers make choices.

²⁰ 7,000 Island residents represents 22% of PEI’s 32,000 residents who drink heavily who will be empowered to CHOOSE WELL by no longer drinking heavily. This is equivalent to a reduction in PEI’s heavy drinking prevalence from 23.8% to 15%.

²¹ World Health Organization, [Alcohol](#)

²² Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE), PEI Results. [CAPE Report: PEI Results](#)

²³ Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms data tool, [csuch.ca/explore-the-data/](#)

²⁴ Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drugs Survey 2021-2022. [Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey](#)

²⁵ University of Waterloo, [2023 COMPASS Survey: PEI Provincial Report](#)

²⁶ Statistics Canada, [Impaired driving in Canada, 2019](#)

²⁷ Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, [Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#)

A large body of evidence shows that strengthened alcohol policy is the best way to help individuals choose well and reduce harmful alcohol use.²⁸ Since 2012, the Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) project has assessed alcohol policies in provinces and territories across Canada. Each jurisdiction is provided a report card containing a grade and policy recommendations across 11 policy domains. Only PEI and Newfoundland have failed all three CAPE report cards in 2012, 2017, and 2023. In 2023, all Atlantic Provinces received a failing grade and PEI received an overall score of 37%, failing in 7 out of 11 policy domains²⁹: physical availability, control system, marketing and advertising controls, minimum legal age, health and safety messaging, liquor law enforcement, and alcohol strategy. If PEI implemented the best existing alcohol policies across Canada, we would receive a CAPE report card score of 80%, demonstrating that strengthened alcohol policy to reduce alcohol-related harms is achievable.

CURRENT WORK

As a crown corporation, the PEI Liquor Control Commission (PEILCC) is mandated by the PEI Liquor Control Act to control the sale of beverage alcohol in Prince Edward Island.³⁰ The PEILCC promotes responsible drinking and works to keep beverage alcohol out of the wrong hands. Responsible retailing starts in-store with PEILCC employees diligently checking customers for valid identification. Externally, advertising and social marketing techniques are used to build awareness of various matters including Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health, binge drinking, buying for minors, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder and planning ahead to get home safely. The PEILCC endeavours to strike the balance between fulfilling its social mandate and giving Islanders a great experience shopping for the beverages that enhance their social occasions. The PEI Liquor Control Act, Liquor Control Regulations, and Liquor Agency Regulations are pieces of legislation used to regulate the sale of beverage alcohol in PEI.³¹

Harmful use of alcohol has a wide impact across PEI with the public sector, private sector, not-for-profit organizations, health and social service providers, and the criminal justice system working to reduce alcohol-related harms. Within the provincial government, the PEI Department of Justice and Public Safety addresses the public safety concern of impaired driving. PEI's Chief Public Health Office monitors alcohol-related harm in PEI and promotes public awareness of alcohol-related health risks using campaigns such as "Less is Best" based on the new Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The following actions are proposed to achieve PEI's five-year goal of empowering 7,000 more Island residents to **CHOOSE WELL** by reducing their alcohol use.

5. Strengthen alcohol policy in PEI by developing a Provincial Alcohol Strategy (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)

²⁸ Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE), Methodology and Evidence, [CAPE Methodology and Evidence](#)
World Health Organization, [2010 Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol](#)

²⁹ Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE), PEI Results. [CAPE Report: PEI Results](#)

³⁰ PEI Liquor Control Commission, [Social Responsibility](#)

³¹ PEI Liquor Control Commission, [Liquor Control Act and Regulations](#)

In March 2021, PEI's Chief Public Health Office invited 53 civil society organizations, 10 government departments and 13 agencies, boards and commissions to participate in an on-line survey and focus groups regarding CAPE's 26 alcohol policy recommendations for PEI. All sectors agreed with CAPE's central recommendation to develop a provincial alcohol strategy that includes a wide range of evidence-based public health policies. CAPE recommends that this strategy is developed independently of the alcohol industry and has public health and safety leadership, dedicated funding, an implementation timeline, and regular public-facing engagement. This action would develop and implement a Provincial Alcohol Strategy that addresses CAPE's 2023 policy recommendations. Focus would be placed on the seven policy domains where PEI obtained a failing policy score: physical availability, control system, marketing and advertising controls, minimum legal age, health and safety messaging, liquor law enforcement, and alcohol strategy.

Resources

- i. [Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation \(CAPE\)](#)
- ii. [Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation \(CAPE\) - PEI Results](#)

6. **Develop a provincial Alcohol Harm Prevention Network (COMMUNITY ACTION)**

Although alcoholic beverages are part of PEI's social landscape, community awareness of the health and social impacts of alcohol consumption is low. Similarly, many communities have little knowledge of what can be done to reduce alcohol-related harms and limited capacity to undertake these actions. This action would develop a provincial Alcohol Harm Prevention Network to support community-led, evidence-informed initiatives to reduce the harmful use of alcohol in PEI. Community-led alcohol harm prevention projects would be supported through grant funding provided on the LIVE WELL PEI platform. Other jurisdictions in Canada have established similar networks. An example is the recently established Nova Scotia Alcohol Policy Coalition.

Resources

- i. [Nova Scotia Alcohol Policy Coalition](#)

7. **Promote Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral (PREVENTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY)**

Screening, brief intervention, and referral (SBIR) is an evidence-based approach to ask and provide help to individuals who consume alcohol above low-risk levels. Strong evidence shows that SBIR in healthcare and social service settings and online self-guided SBIR resources are effective methods for reducing harmful use of alcohol. Evidence-informed SBIR guidelines exist but require promotion and uptake among service providers. This action would advance the use of SBIR in PEI.

Resources

- i. [Public Health Ontario: Alcohol Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral](#)
- ii. [Canadian Medical Association Journal: Brief interventions for Alcohol Misuse](#)



EAT WELL



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THEME 3: EAT WELL



5-YEAR PROVINCIAL GOAL

Empower 18,000 more Island residents to EAT WELL by adopting a healthier diet³²

Eating enough servings of vegetables and fruit is critical to good health. On the other hand, consuming unhealthy food and beverages such as sugar-sweetened beverages and highly processed food can lead to weight gain, obesity, and other chronic conditions like high blood pressure and high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and poor mental health.³³ In 2016, unhealthy diets were responsible for 47,000 deaths in Canada.³⁴ Based on eating patterns from the 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey, it's estimated that Canada's healthy eating recommendations has an economic burden of disease cost of \$26 billion annually.³⁵ **In 2015/16, only 28.5% of Island residents consumed at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.** Among grade 7 to 12 students in PEI, only 41% reported eating vegetables seven days per week and 40% reported eating fruits seven days per week. While vegetable consumption was stable across all grades, fruit consumption decreased from 47% in grade 7 to 35% in grade 12.³⁶ In both the adult and student population, males were less likely than females to consume fruits and vegetables.³⁷

Many Island residents have limited access to affordable healthy foods, like fruits and vegetables. In 2017/18, household food insecurity was reported by 14.0% (19,000) of PEI residents compared to 12.7% of Canadians.³⁸ In 2021, among youth in PEI, 25.4% lived in food-insecure households (i.e., 1 in 5 youth).³⁹ **When healthy foods are not available or accessible, individuals may settle for foods higher in calories and lower in nutritional value.**⁴⁰ This, in turn, makes it difficult for people to manage their weight and can further impact chronic disease risk. Individual dietary patterns are influenced by complex elements and without supportive programs and policies healthy eating trends may continue to worsen in PEI. In May 2021, PEI passed the first bill in Canada aimed at eliminating food insecurity in children and reducing the rate of food insecurity to half, by 2025.

³² Healthy eating is estimated using the % of Island residents 12 years and older consuming five or more servings of fruit and vegetables per day. 18,000 Island residents empowered to EAT WELL represents an increase in this measure from 28.5% to 33%.

³³ CDC, [Poor nutrition](#)

³⁴ Bacon et al 2019. [Canada's new Healthy Eating Strategy: Implications for health care professionals and a call to action.](#)

³⁵ Loewen et al 2019. [Economic burden of not complying with Canadian Food Recommendations in 2018](#)

³⁶ University of Waterloo, [PEI COMPASS School Survey Provincial Report](#)

³⁷ 2021 Chief Public Health Officer's Report, <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/chief-public-health-officers-report-2021>

³⁸ 2021 Chief Public Health Officer's Report, <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/chief-public-health-officers-report-2021>

³⁹ Tarasuk V, Li Tim, Fafard St-Germain Andree-Anne. 2021. [Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2021](#)

⁴⁰ [Center for Disease Control and Prevention.2023. Healthy Food Environments](#)

CURRENT WORK

Many stakeholders help to promote healthy eating in PEI. As Canada's rural and agricultural based 'Food Island', PEI works locally to increase access to healthy food, create healthy eating environments, build food security, and support local food systems. The not-for-profit PEI School Food Program, using an equity framework, has made it easier for students in the public-school system to access affordable lunch options during the school year and throughout the summer months. Improving food environments has been an important policy focus for public health and others. The Children's Nutrition Committee, facilitated by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of PEI, has created a *Health Eating in PEI Recreation Settings: Action Starter Kit* aimed at helping facility and canteen operators and municipalities transition to healthier food and beverage offerings in their facilities. Ongoing health promotion initiatives like providing wellness grant funding that builds food skills within a community, promoting recommendations within Canada's Food Guide, and advocating for new or updated policies that improve healthy food and beverage choices, access, and affordability are necessary to help all Island residents eat well.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The following actions are proposed to achieve PEI's five-year goal of empowering 18,000 more Island residents to **EAT WELL by adopting a healthier diet.**

8. Introduce a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are beverages that contain added sugar and include soft drinks, sodas, fruit drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks, and sweetened coffees, teas, and electrolyte replacement drinks. SSBs have no nutritional value and are a significant source of excess sugar in the diets of Canadians. Excess consumption of sugary drinks is associated with an increased risk of obesity and a higher risk of type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.⁴¹ An increasing number of jurisdictions around the world are implementing SSB taxes to lower the consumption of unhealthy beverages, reduce demand on health services, apply revenue to investment in healthy diet/weight initiatives, and encourage product reformulation.⁴² In 2023, Newfoundland and Labrador became the first province in Canada to introduce a tax on SSBs aligning with recommendations to reduce SSB consumption made by health organizations including the World Health Organization, Health Canada, and the Canadian Pediatric Society.

Resources

- i. [Newfoundland Provincial Government Encourages Residents to 'Rethink Your Drink'](#)
- ii. [World Health Organization: Calls to Tax Sugar-Sweetened Beverages to Save Lives](#)

⁴¹ Malik et al., 2022. [The role of sugar-sweetened beverages in the global epidemics of obesity and chronic diseases](#)

⁴² Jones C Amanda, Veerman J Lennert. Hammond David. 2017. [The Health and Economic Impact of a Tax on Sugary Drinks in Canada](#)

9. Restrict advertising and promotion of unhealthy food and drink (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)

Food advertising can greatly affect children's attitudes toward food, their preferences, and their overall health. In Canada, children are frequently exposed to advertisements promoting foods that are high in sodium, sugar, and saturated fat. Consuming diets that are high in these substances poses a significant risk factor for obesity and other chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, which has increased among children over the past two decades.⁴³ As a result, many leading global health agencies such as the World Health Organization have recommended the implementation of policies to restrict or eliminate unhealthy food marketing to children as a critical strategy to prevent obesity.⁴⁴ This action would develop laws regulating advertising, promotion and incentives such as toys and games, in places where children/families spend time, such as recreation facilities, to reduce child exposure and consumption of unhealthy foods and help improve food choices.

Resources

- i. [Heart & Stroke: Healthy Eating in PEI Recreation Settings](#)

10. Legislate menu labeling of food and beverages (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)

In 2016, more than half of Canadians reported eating food outside the home at least once a week. Increased frequency of eating out is associated with lower diet quality including higher intakes of total energy, sodium, sugars and saturated fat, and lower intake of micronutrients.⁴⁵ To help consumers make healthier choices when eating out, mandatory menu labeling provides customers with nutritional information for standard menu items, including food on display and self-service foods in chain restaurants or similar food establishments.⁴⁶ In 2017, Ontario implemented menu labeling legislation through the Healthy Menu Choices Act. This Act assists families in making informed food choices while dining in a restaurant or buying takeout meals. By implementing similar legislation in PEI, Island residents would be equipped to make healthy choices.

Resources

- i. [Healthy Menu Choices Act: Ontario](#)

11. Implement standards for healthy food in government-supported institutions (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)

Our food environment in Canada has changed significantly over the years and is currently dominated by food products that are high in salt, sugar, and saturated fats. These products are becoming increasingly more accessible and are promoted more heavily than their nutrient-dense counterparts, which is contributing to the development of poor eating habits among Canadians.⁴⁷ Government-supported institutions, such as schools, hospitals, care homes, early childhood centers, and post-secondary institutions, are an ideal setting to create healthy food environments

⁴³ Diabetes Canada. Type 2 [Diabetes in Children and Adolescents](#)

⁴⁴ Taillie LS, Busey E, Stoltze FM, Dillman Carpentier FR. [Governmental policies to reduce unhealthy food marketing to children](#)

⁴⁵ Polsky Y Jane. Garriguet Didier. 2021. [Eating away from home in Canada: Impact on dietary intake](#)

⁴⁶ [FDA's Implementation of Menu Labeling Moving Forward.2019](#)

⁴⁷ Vanderlee L, Goorang S, Karbasy K, Vandevijvere S, L'Abbé MR. [Policies to Create Healthier Food Environments in Canada: Experts' Evaluation and Prioritized Actions Using the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index \(Food-EPI\)](#)

and encourage healthy food choices. By implementing standards in government-supported institutions, PEI can encourage facilities to provide healthy food choices.⁴⁸

Resources

- i. [Creating Healthier Food Environments](#)

12. **Work with partners to increase access to safe, local, and healthy food (COMMUNITY ACTION)**

As Canada’s rural and agricultural-based Food Island, PEI works locally to increase access to healthy food, create healthy eating environments, build food security, and support local food systems.⁴⁹ Community-based food and nutrition programs, such as community kitchens, farmers’ markets, community gardens and greenhouses, and school food programs all contribute to enhancing the availability of healthy and nutritious foods. Supporting local food production and distribution through procurement and land use policies can improve access to safe, local, and healthy foods while also improving food security and supporting local economies. This action would work with partners and industry to increase access to safe, local, and healthy foods to improve PEI’s local food environment and reduce barriers to eating well.

Resources

- i. [Delivering Community Benefit: Healthy Food Playbook](#)

13. **Launch a Prescription for Healthy Living program⁵⁰ to empower Island residents towards healthy eating (PREVENTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY)**

Island residents rely on the advice of their health service providers such as physicians, physiotherapists, and pharmacists. There is evidence that a health service provider’s prescription (recommendation) for healthy eating and physical activity can be effective at improving health and preventing illness and injury. A Prescription for Healthy Living program would encourage health service providers to write a prescription for Island residents who would benefit from support for a healthy lifestyle. The prescription would be ‘filled’ by enrolling in the Prescription for Healthy Living program which would provide guidance and resources (e.g., coaching, passes to access facilities, links to groups and activities, healthy eating vouchers, food skills). This action would develop a Prescription for Healthy Living program for PEI.

Resources

- i. [Priority Nutrition Strategy: Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

⁴⁸ Reynolds, Jennifer. Bas, Anna Jajji. [Nourishing the Future of Food in Health Care. A Pan-Canadian Policy Scan 2018.](#)

⁴⁹ PEI’s approach aligns with the National food strategy mission. [The National Food Strategy - The Plan](#)

⁵⁰ The Prescription for Healthy Living program also addresses physical activity (see MOVE WELL).

MOVE WELL



LIVE WELL PEI

together we can

THEME 4: MOVE WELL



5-YEAR PROVINCIAL GOAL

Empower 20,000 more Island residents to MOVE WELL by meeting physical activity guidelines⁵¹

OVERVIEW

Physical inactivity has been identified as **the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality.**⁵² **Physical activity levels have been declining in PEI** and were lower in PEI than in Canada, with only 48.3% (64,000) of Islander residents ages 12 years and older meeting the Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines.⁵³ Only 16.0% of PEI youth 12 to 17 years old met recommended levels of physical activity in 2017/18, making this age group the least likely to meet the guidelines. In Canada, this decrease in physical activity has coincided with an increase in sedentary behavior and screen time.⁵⁴ **Regular physical activity is proven to help prevent and manage chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes (type 2) and several cancers.**⁵⁵ It can also support healthy weights and provide other health benefits among individuals who are overweight and obese.

To improve physical activity rates and reduce sedentary behaviour, we need to empower Island residents towards meeting the Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines. These guidelines provide direction on physical activity, sedentary behaviour (e.g., screen-time) and sleep, and offer direction on what a healthy 24 hours looks like for Canadians.⁵⁶ Engaging in competitive or recreational sport is one way to become more physically active. However, physical activity goes beyond sport and includes becoming more active in the daily activities of life such as walking with friends, cycling to work, or playing with children. Incorporating activity into our everyday lives becomes easier when our communities are designed to make movement accessible and the easy choice.

CURRENT WORK

Many stakeholders are involved in encouraging physical activity in PEI. There are community organizations and initiatives that support physical activity programming (e.g., Recreation PEI, go!PEI

⁵¹ Physical activity is estimated using the % of Island residents 12 years and older meeting the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. 20,000 Island residents empowered to MOVE WELL represents an increase in this measure from 48.3% to 50%.

⁵² World Health Organization, [Physical activity](#)

⁵³ 2021, PEI Chief Public Health Officer's Report. <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/chief-public-health-officers-report-2021>.

⁵⁴ Participation, [2020 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth](#)

⁵⁵ Health Canada, [Physical activity and your health](#)

⁵⁶ Canadian Centre for Exercise Physiology, [24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#)

community programming) and advocacy (e.g., Bike Friendly Communities advocacy on active transportation). Island Trails and Parks Canada, along with watershed organizations, support the maintenance of trail systems in PEI. The Canada Games Legacy funding supports the building of new infrastructure and ongoing elite sport programming. Schools and community centres house community activities, including exercise programs, intramural and sport activities, etc. The development of new bike lanes (e.g., Hillsborough Bridge, Cornwall to Charlottetown connection) and programs like the provincial bike rebate and e-bike incentive are strengthening active transportation for utilitarian and recreation purposes. Private sector partners like Canadian Tire and sport and fitness facilities also provide programs that foster physical activity.

The Department of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture's Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Division is responsible for sport and recreation in PEI including supporting community physical activity initiatives such as Recreation PEI and go!PEI's community programming. This Division also provides leadership and funding to regional sport councils across PEI. The Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action is responsible for initiatives related to active transportation infrastructure in PEI, such as the provincial Active Transportation Network and the PEI Climate Challenge Fund. The Department of Education and Early Years is responsible for the health and physical education curriculum in K-12 schools, including the number of minutes of physical activity instruction per week during the school year to help students build physical literacy and positive attitudes toward active living.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The following actions are proposed to achieve PEI's five-year goal of empowering 20,000 more Island residents to **MOVE WELL by meeting physical activity guidelines.**

14. **Strengthen Provincial and Municipal planning legislation (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)**

Transportation and land use planning can support active transport and healthy built environments. For example, safe routes for children to walk to school, walkable neighborhoods, green spaces, trails, and active transportation corridors such as bike lanes. Canada's Chief Public Health Officer emphasizes that "cities and communities can be designed and built to set people up for success so that healthy choices are the easier choices."⁵⁷ Prioritizing healthy public policy and legislation to create supportive environments at the municipal and provincial levels will help to increase the

⁵⁷ Theresa Tam (2017), Public Health Agency of Canada. [The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada.](#)

number of Island residents meeting physical activity guidelines. This action will build on existing frameworks to strengthen provincial and municipal planning legislation to support active living.

Resources

- i. [Canadian Partnership Against Cancer – Active Transportation Policies](#)
- ii. [Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on Designing Healthy Living](#)

15. Increase accessibility of places where Island residents can be physically active (COMMUNITY ACTION)

The places where we learn, work and play are an important focus of many Island resident’s lives. By increasing opportunities at these places to be physically active, active living can be more easily integrated into daily life. This action would encourage workplaces, educational institutions, and community facilities to adopt less sedentary practices and support individuals in meeting Canada’s 24-hour movement guidelines. For example, Canada’s movement guidelines would be incorporated into early childhood and school policies. This action also includes extending the hours of operation of schools and community facilities to provide more spaces for Island residents to be active, particularly during the winter months.

Resources

- i. [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#)
- ii. [Promoting Physical Activity Through the Shared Use of School Recreational Spaces](#)

16. Launch a Prescription for Healthy Living program⁵⁸ to empower Island residents to increase their physical activity (PREVENTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY)

Island residents rely on the advice of their health service providers such as physicians, physiotherapists, and pharmacists. There is evidence that a health service provider’s prescription (recommendation) for healthy eating and physical activity can be effective at improving health and preventing illness and injury. A Prescription for Healthy Living program would encourage health service providers to write a prescription for Island residents who would benefit from support for a healthy lifestyle. The prescription would be ‘filled’ by enrolling in the Prescription for Healthy Living program which would provide guidance and resources (e.g., coaching, passes to access facilities, links to groups and activities, healthy eating vouchers, food skills). This action would develop a Prescription for Healthy Living program for PEI.

Resources

- i. [Alberta Prescription to Get Active](#)

⁵⁸ The Prescription for Healthy Living program also addresses healthy eating (see EAT WELL).

EMPOWERING CHANGE



OVERVIEW

Globally, human population is growing and PEI's population has been following a similar trend since 2014.⁵⁹ PEI's population is predicted to reach 200,000 by 2030.⁶⁰ The world is also moving from high to low rates of both mortality and fertility and although people are living longer, they are not necessarily living healthier lives.⁶¹ The burden of disease remains a challenge and requires new solutions towards prevention and health promotion. **Health Promotion brings together the public, government, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector to support communities in preventing disease and achieving health, wellbeing, and health equity.**⁶²

In her 2021 annual report, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer indicated that our public health system must be better equipped to deal with challenges to our collective health. A strengthened public health system must also work with other sectors to address social and economic circumstances that influence health.⁶³ To advance wellness in PEI, a whole-of-society approach is needed to empower individuals to take control over and improve their health. Research shows that empowering individuals leads to community mobilization where individuals, groups, and organizations identify their own needs and respond to and address these needs.⁶⁴ Community mobilization leads to greater sustainability, as communities are empowered and capable of addressing their own needs.

CURRENT WORK

Since 2015, the PEI Chief Public Health Office Health Promotion Unit has been promoting wellness in PEI with an emphasis on strengthening community action. More than 120 community projects have received funding through the Wellness Grant Program and annual conferences and virtual forums have provided learning and networking opportunities among partners. Recent launch of **LIVE WELL PEI** social media channels in 2021 and the **LIVE WELL PEI** website in 2023 helps to share educational information, research, tools and resources to support individuals and communities across PEI to live well. Numerous

⁵⁹ PEI Statistics Bureau, Department of Finance, [Prince Edward Island Population Report 2023](#)

⁶⁰ CBC, [PEI population crossed 180K mark, Statistics Canada projects](#)

⁶¹ World Health Organization (WHO), [Bending the Trends to Promote Health and Well-Being: A strategic foresight on the future of health promotion](#)

⁶² University of Toronto, [Governing for the Public's Health: Governance Options for a Strengthened and Renewed Public Health System in Canada](#)

⁶³ Government of Canada, [A Vision to Transform Canada's Public Health System](#)

⁶⁴ Health Promotion Glossary of Terms 2021, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240038349>

campaigns promoting national standards and guidelines aimed at developing personal skills and empowering behavior change have been implemented. The success of these initiatives relies on cooperation and collaboration with other government departments and agencies, other levels of government, First Nation governments, organizations, learning institutions, businesses, and community leaders; all provide resources (staff, time, funding, space, etc.) and act as a catalyst to support community mobilization efforts across PEI.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The following actions are proposed to build on the **LIVE WELL PEI** framework. These foundational actions enable change across all four health behaviours: **BREATHE WELL, CHOOSE WELL, EAT WELL, and MOVE WELL.**

17. Form a provincial LIVE WELL PEI Action Committee

Since wellness in PEI requires a whole-of-society approach, this action would establish a **LIVE WELL PEI** Action Committee with broad membership to advance wellness in PEI. The **LIVE WELL PEI** Action Committee would assess feedback from this public consultation, develop an annual workplan, coordinate community grants (e.g., LIVE WELL PEI, PEI Alliance for Mental Wellbeing, other Department grants), identify and adapt policies and legislation that influence chronic disease, measure performance on the plan, and issue an annual progress report.

Resources

- i. [Example: Approach to PEI Healthy Child Development](#)

18. Build the LIVE WELL PEI online community action platform (COMMUNITY ACTION)

Communities need to be empowered to collaborate and lead local wellness initiatives. Recently, a new **LIVE WELL PEI** website was launched. The website contains information on concepts and approaches, policies and programs, tools and resources, and research and reports that focus on four behavioural risk factors, and equity and the social determinants of health. This action would enhance the **LIVE WELL PEI website** to become an interactive web platform to provide communities with 1) local data, 2) a wellness grant application system, 3) access to technical experts, and 4) health behaviour resources.

Resources

- i. [Live Well PEI website](#)

19. Establish community networks for BREATHE WELL, CHOOSE WELL, EAT WELL, and MOVE WELL (COMMUNITY ACTION)

A mechanism for engaging communities in local wellness initiatives is necessary to achieve **LIVE WELL PEI's** 5-year goals. Community networks provide a structure through which groups and organizations across the province can work together and learn from one another. It encourages multi-sectoral engagement and ensures equal attention is paid to each of the risk factors. This action would establish a community network for each of the four health behaviours: **BREATHE WELL,**

CHOOSE WELL, EAT WELL, and MOVE WELL. These networks would be linked to the **LIVE WELL PEI** Action Committee, ensuring community voices are active participants and decision makers.

Resources

- i. [Example: Nova Scotia Alcohol Policy Coalition](#)

20. **Invest in public awareness regarding chronic diseases, risk factors, the social determinants of health, and health equity (COMMUNITY ACTION)**

Promoting wellness in PEI requires broad public messaging through communication channels including social media, video, audio, and print media. Messaging should be designed to reach all Island residents but also be targeted to groups at greater risk for chronic disease. This action would invest in ongoing public awareness campaign(s) to promote healthy eating, physical activity, living tobacco-free, and lower consumption of alcohol.

Resources

- i. Social media channels (@LiveWellPEI on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#))
- ii. [Tobacco/vaping prevention campaign: Take a Breath PEI](#)
- iii. [Alcohol reduction campaign: Less is Best](#)

21. **Increase LIVE WELL PEI community action grant funding (COMMUNITY ACTION)**

The current **LIVE WELL PEI** Grant Program has an annual budget of \$50,000 and provides the opportunity for not-for-profit organizations, schools, Indigenous Nations and groups, organizations and communities to apply for one-time funding for new projects and initiatives. The **LIVE WELL PEI** Grant Program has been designed to support collaboration at the local level to reduce barriers, increase supports, and enhance resources that positively influence health outcomes and make healthy choices easier for all Island residents. To have a measurable impact on wellness in PEI, funding for this granting program needs to be increased.

Resources

- i. [LIVE WELL PEI Wellness Grant Program](#)

22. **Improve provincial and community-level chronic disease and health equity monitoring (COMMUNITY ACTION)**

Better information on chronic disease, health behaviours, and social determinants of health can empower change for communities across PEI. This action would develop a provincial **LIVE WELL PEI** survey to fill evidence gaps related to chronic disease, health behavior, and social determinants; enrich survey data with information from the provincial electronic medical record; and provide community access to Open data for chronic diseases, risk factors, and the social determinants of health.

Resources

- i. [2021 PEI Chief Public Health Officer's Report](#)

23. **Implement a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach in Prince Edward Island (HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY)**

Health in All Policies (HiAP) is a government-endorsed strategy to influence policymaking in non-health sectors. The aim is to improve the social determinants of health and health equity or, at a minimum, minimize the negative health impacts of policymaking outside the health sector. Three components of HiAP are: processes/tools to influence policymaking; intersectoral collaborations and multidimensional solutions; and an overarching government strategy. This action would implement a Health in All Policies approach for Prince Edward Island.

Resources

- i. [National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy - Health in All Policies](#)

CONCLUSION

Working together, we can empower Island residents to **LIVE WELL** by making the healthy choice, the easy choice. We want your input on these proposed actions to improve wellness in Prince Edward Island. We also want to hear what other actions should be considered to reach our provincial wellness goals. Your input will be used to inform the development of a 5-year **LIVE WELL PEI** wellness action plan. We look forward to hearing from you.