The Case for Cannabis Drinks

Recommendations for Parity in Alcohol and Cannabis Beverage Marketing, Promotion, and Distribution in Canada
Alcohol’s Harms

Financial, health, and societal costs
Alcohol is costly

$14.5\text{ billion}$ in annual costs to Canadian economy in health care, criminal justice, and lost productivity (vs. $1\text{ billion}$ for cannabis)

39% (14.7 billion) of the $38 billion abuse burden to Canadians
Alcohol is costly
Alcohol is harmful

Leading risk factor for disease burden worldwide

7th leading cause of death and disability in Canada in 2016

Directly linked to chronic health conditions, including cancer, diabetes, and liver disease, among others

20% of all violent crime committed in Canada is related to alcohol use
Mortality impact

WHO report: Among deaths attributed to alcohol intake:

- **28.7%** due to injury
- **21.3%** due to digestive diseases
- **19.0%** attributed to cardiovascular diseases
- **12.9%** related to infectious diseases
- **12.6%** due to cancers
Costs to Canadians

In 2014, substance use cost Canadians more than:

$38 BILLION

Which amounts to almost $1,100 for every Canadian regardless of age.

The cost of substance use (in billions):

- Alcohol: $14.7
- Tobacco: $12.9
- Cannabis: $2.8
- Opioids: $3.5
- Other CNS depressants: $1.5
- CNS stimulants: $2.2
- Other substances: $0.6
- Cocaine: $1.1

Almost 70% of the total costs are due to alcohol and tobacco.

More information can be found at www.csuch.ca
Cannabis as a solution

Cannabis-infused beverages as a safer alternative
Cannabis as a solution

October 2018: Canada enacted The Cannabis Act, allowing the legalization of recreational use of cannabis in bud and flower format.

October 2019: Estimated timing for the legalization of cannabis edibles.

As an alternative to alcohol, cannabis-infused beverages can play an important role in Canada’s harm reduction and health protection strategies.
Recommendations

How to protect Canadians and reduce societal costs
Recommendations

Access:

Cannabis-infused, adult format beverages should be granted selling rights in all locations where alcohol is legally allowed to be sold in Canada.
Recommendations

Convenience and safety:

Familiar formats, such as wine and beer, allow Canadian consumers to buy regulated products in the same locations for consistency while controlling access to minors.
Rationale

Why cannabis-infused beverages offer a solution
Rationale

Recent research:
• The safest level of drinking alcohol is none
• In U.S. states where cannabis is legal, alcohol consumption rates declined by up to 22%

Safety: Overconsuming cannabis is physiologically impossible

Similar effects: Cannabis-infused beverages offer a social lubricant with similar onset and duration, but with far fewer negative health and societal impacts
Rationale (cont’d)

**Consumer appeal:** Unlike alcohol, cannabis offers medicinal, therapeutic, and social benefits

**Consumer demand:** Deloitte found 58% of likely consumers plan to purchase and use edibles

**Aligns with federal policy:** Cannabis-infused beverages support the Canadian government’s aims of harm reduction, health protection and elimination of the black market
Calculating demand for cannabis-infused beer

19,916,000 consumers who drink alcohol

254.75 (371 ml size) bottles per capita

5,073,501,420 bottles of beer per annum

If 31% of the population is interested in using cannabis beverages, cannabis-infused beer volume would be:

1,572,785,440 bottles (or 65,534,013 standard cases of 24 bottles) of cannabis-infused beer per year
Results

Potential financial, health, and societal cost savings
Results

$4 \text{ billion} \text{ in reduced costs of societal harm from converting from beer with alcohol to cannabis-infused beer alone}

Additional savings for lost productivity and criminal justice costs

Of the $14.1 \text{ billion} \text{ of societal costs created by alcohol, Canada could realize:}

$4.37 \text{ billion} \text{ in related harm reduction savings}

25,700 fewer hospital visits

7% reduction of all violent crime
Learn more

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