

# Overview of Legislation/Policies Addressing Nutrition, Physical Activity and Alcohol

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# Overview of Presentation

- Definition/role of healthy public policies
- Purpose of environmental scan
- Overview of key findings: trends and issues
- Facilitators/barriers to healthy public policy development

# Healthy Public Policies



- encompass a range of strategies, including legislation, taxation, mandated education, and fiscal incentives

# Healthy Public Policies

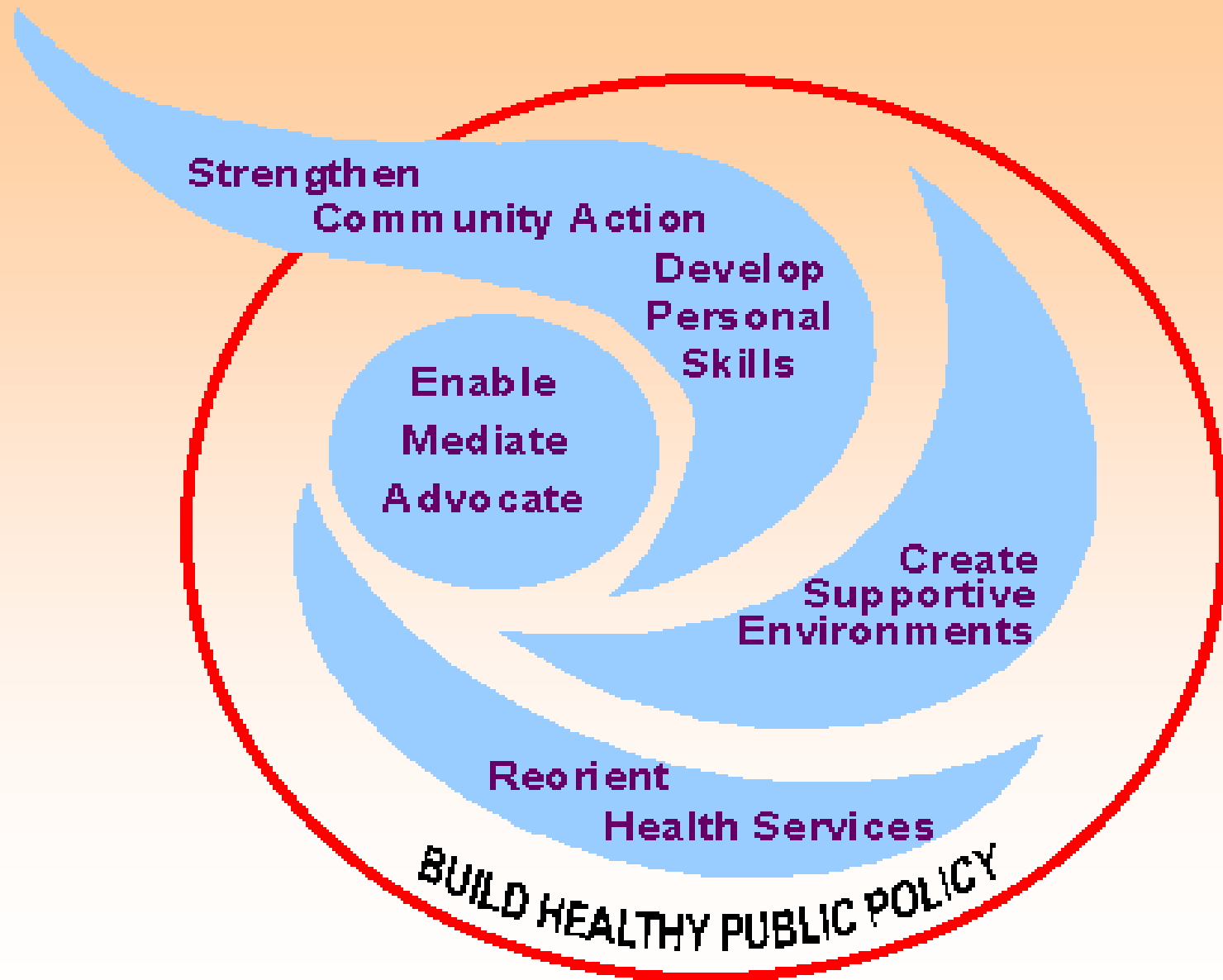
- Promote the health of individuals and communities by:
  - making it easier to adopt healthy practices
  - making it more difficult to adopt unhealthy practices
  - creating healthy physical and social environments

# Health Impact of Policy

- A 10% increase in the price of cigarettes decreases consumption by up to 4% among adults and up to 14% among youth

Health Canada

# OTTAWA CHARTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTION



# Purpose of CPAC Policy Scan

- To assess and interpret the links between cancer prevention and existing nutrition, physical activity, alcohol and public health education policies (1997-2007) adopted by all three levels of government (federal, provincial/territorial and local).
- To identify the factors contributing to the development and sustainability of policies addressing nutrition, physical activity, alcohol and public education by all three levels of government.
- To create a baseline policy and legislation inventory in the form of an easily accessible and searchable tool that will guide future research on cancer prevention policies in Canada.

# Methodology

- website searches
- key informant interviews
- development of legislation/policy annotations using a standard format

# Key Findings: Emerging Trends

## Nutrition:

- mandatory nutrition labelling embracing 'right to know' principles
- action towards regulating/banning trans fats
- school-based policies regulating nutritional content
- variance in school feeding programs
- local food security initiatives

# Key Findings/Emerging Trends

## Physical Activity:

- use of tax credits as incentive for participation in physical activity
- increased focus on physical activity in schools through daily physical activity (DPA) requirements and updated physical education curricula
- active transportation policies
- equitable access policies for disadvantaged youth

# Key Findings/Emerging Trends

## Alcohol:

- wide variance in provincial/territorial taxes/levies on alcohol; no policies linking tax rises to consumer price index
- Provincial/territorial *Liquor Control Act* amendments generally placing greater restrictions on availability and distribution of alcohol

# Key Findings/Emerging Trends

- Overall trend towards development of comprehensive health promotion strategies, especially at federal and provincial/territorial level



# **Policy Development: Facilitators and Barriers**







*“There are two things you never want to see:  
sausage making and policy development.”*

Otto Von Bismarck

## Factors Contributing to Development of Sustainable Healthy Public Policies

- persuasive evidence backed by strong science
- political will, having key political allies
- ability to influence political decision makers
- credible stakeholders, who are able to collaborate with one another through networks and partnerships
- strong public opinion in favor of the proposed policy change

# Barriers to the Development of Sustainable Healthy Public Policies

- existing structural division between federal and provincial/territorial levels of government results in a high level of ‘patchwork’ variance in risk factor reduction policies.
- Canada Health Transfer does not include provisions to ensure that public monies are used for preventive or other health promotion initiatives.
- lack of evidence, including limited baseline data and lack of monitoring/reporting mechanisms for promising initiatives
- lack of political leadership and ideological differences amongst parties
- inability of decision makers to think long-term (i.e. ‘beyond election ‘window’)
- power of vested interests (e.g., industry)
- lack of public support

# Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers to Sustainable Healthy Public Policies

- more awareness raising and educational efforts to build public support
- more work to identify and build on lessons learned from other jurisdictions
- more emphasis on incentives for healthy choices (i.e., ‘carrots’ rather than ‘sticks’)
- address the political impediments to a longer-term vision through an incremental approach emphasizing small successes in a strategic way that builds momentum for change (i.e., a tipping point)
- conduct advocacy through network models that involve researchers and practitioners working together.
- take a broader perspective on policy development that encompasses the social determinants of health rather than risk-factor specific approaches