

Building blocks for a public health approach to drug harms: a few thoughts from Québec and Canada

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Québec, Canada?



The INSPQ mandate



Expert support to the Health and social services ministry of Quebec
and the Regional public health authorities

1908-1989: the abstinence paradigm



1908

« An Act to prohibit the importation, manufacture, and sale of Opium for other than medical purposes »

2017

The Minister may (...) exempt from the application (...) of this Act or the regulations any person (...) or any controlled substance (...) if, in the opinion of the Minister, the exemption is necessary for a **medical** or **scientific** purpose or is otherwise in the **public interest**.

1908-1989: the abstinence paradigm




Non-use the organizing principle of
enforcement, treatment and prevention

1973

Final Report of Commission of Inquiry into the
non-medical use of drugs (Federal)

1989- : abstinence if necessary, but not
necessarily abstinence



1980s

Detection of HIV transmission
in populations of people who inject drugs

1989- : abstinence if necessary, but not necessarily abstinence

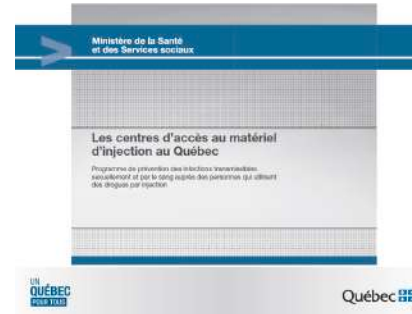
1989: First needle exchange service in North America

Cactus Montreal



Source: WikiCommons
Photographer: Jean Gagnon

Today: 1200+ points of access to
clean injection material in Quebec



1989- : abstinence if necessary, but not necessarily abstinence

2000 - Opioids overdose deaths

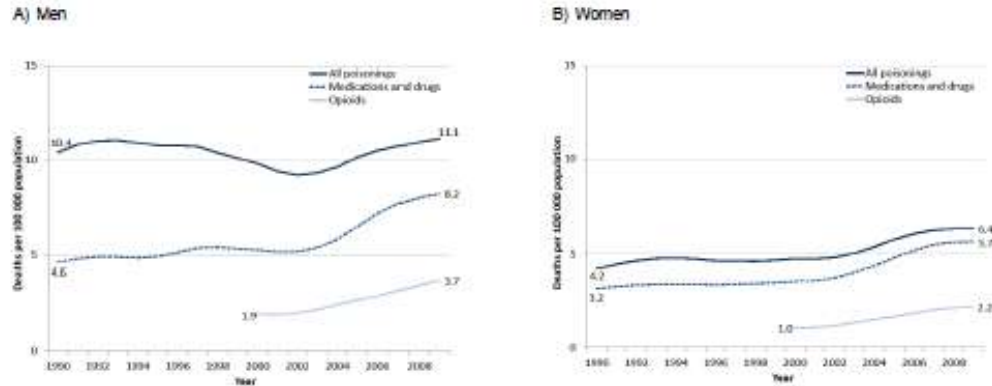


Figure 1 Weighted moving average of the adjusted poisoning-related death rate in the population 20 years of age or over according to type by gender, Québec, 1990 to 2009

Source: Gagné et al. (2013)

1989- : abstinence if necessary, but
not necessarily abstinence

2003: first safe injection service in Canada



Source:
www.drepetercenter.org

1989- : abstinence if necessary, but not necessarily abstinence

2017: 3 (+1 soon) in Montreal



Source: OIIQ

1989- : abstinence if necessary,
but not necessarily abstinence

Naloxone distribution

Crack smoking material distribution

Low treshold housing



1989- : abstinence if necessary,
but not necessarily abstinence

Changes in drug enforcement in Québec


Drug possession: low priority for police forces



Cannabis possession: non judiciary treatment by crown prosecutors

Montreal trial: drug treatment court

1989- : abstinence if necessary,
but not necessarily abstinence



Changes in treatment in Québec

From abstinence to recovery
(abstinence if necessary)

eg. Medication-assisted treatment:
methadone, buprenorphine-naloxone...

1989- : abstinence if necessary,
but not necessarily abstinence

Cannabis legalization

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**Legalization of Non-medical
Cannabis: A Public Health
Approach to Regulation**

HIGHLIGHTS AND SUMMARY 2017

Chaparro, M., Gagnon, F., Lapointe, G., Tessier, S., Aprin, N., Fachehoun, R.C., Samuel, O.

This material is drawn from an analysis produced by the INSPQ, at the request of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) [Quebec's ministry of health and social services], on the challenges posed by the legalization of cannabis from a public health perspective.

Highlights

- **Cannabis is the most commonly consumed illegal substance.** The current system of prohibition and its sanctions do not prevent the use of this substance. The most recent data indicate that about 15% of the

Legalization can resonate with health... under certain conditions

The legalization of cannabis is, a priori, compatible with an improvement of public health in Québec. However, the achievement of this potential depends on numerous

Concluding thoughts



Decriminalization is a structural tendency

Achieving public health outcomes implies building
a new system

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