

February, 2015

Dear colleague,

Re: Act now to reduce the impact of second-hand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing in Ontario

As you are aware, tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. Every year, more than 13,000 people in Ontario die because of tobacco use – one person almost every 40 minutes. Tobacco is the only legal product that, when used as intended, kills half of its users prematurely. It can also kill others through involuntary exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS).

Approximately one third of Ontarians living in multi-unit housing (MUH) report regular exposure to SHS that originates in neighbouring units, and 80% of Ontarians would choose a smoke-free building if the choice existed.¹ However, many stakeholders in the housing sector erroneously believe that no-smoking policies are illegal, unenforceable or discriminatory and so many Ontarians continue to be involuntarily exposed to SHS in their home.

Studies have demonstrated that there is no safe level of exposure to SHS—all exposure is harmful and should be eliminated. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, exposure to SHS among children and adults causes a range of adverse health effects, including premature death and disease.² Second-hand smoke is a serious problem for many Ontario residents living in apartments and condominiums, especially those who suffer from chronic health conditions such as heart disease, asthma, allergies, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses. Ontarians spend most of their time at home, and it is in this environment where exposure continues to be reported. For many forced to breathe their neighbour's smoke, the only remedy is to move; however, moving is not always an option for people with disabilities, older adults or those with limited incomes. This is why we need to work toward making smoke-free housing in Ontario the norm, not the exception.

The 2010 Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group (TSAG) report³ regarding Ontario's renewed Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy contains a number of recommendations pertaining to MUH. First and foremost, the report recommends continuing and intensifying a voluntary approach to smoke-free MUH. **The primary goals of the Smoke-Free Housing Ontario Coalition are to facilitate the adoption of no-smoking policies within the housing sector and to create a favourable environment to foster the adoption of those policies. We seek your endorsement in helping us achieve this end.**

Please submit a letter of endorsement of the Smoke-Free Housing Ontario Coalition to either of co-chairs Lorraine Fry at lfry@nsra-adnf.ca or Donna Kosmack at donna.kosmack@mlhu.on.ca. Endorsements are being compiled online the Smoke-Free Housing Ontario website www.smokefreehousingon.ca. A sample statement of endorsement, and a space for your endorsement signature is attached.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Fry
Executive Director, Non-Smokers' Rights Association



Donna Kosmack
Manager, SW Tobacco Control Area Network

¹ Smoke-Free Housing Ontario. 80% of People Living in Apartments, Condos and Co-ops Want to Live Smoke Free. Press release 8 December 2011. <http://www.newswire.ca/en/story/892061/80-of-people-living-in-apartments-condos-and-co-ops-want-to-live-smoke-free>.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. 2006.

³ *Building on our Gains, Taking Action Now: Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy for 2011-2016*. Report from the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group to the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, October 18, 2010. <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/TSAG%20Report.pdf>.

ENDORSEMENT OF ACTION FOR SMOKE-FREE MULTI-UNIT HOUSING

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. Leaders in public health units, local boards of health, non-governmental organizations and health charities in Ontario have a history of speaking out in favour of actions to reduce the harmful impact of tobacco use.

Whereas tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disability in Canada, accounting for the deaths of approximately 13,000 people in Ontario alone each year;⁴

Whereas Second-hand smoke kills 1,000 Canadians annually.^{5, 6}

Whereas Approximately one-third of Ontarians living in multi-unit housing (MUH) report regular exposure to second-hand smoke that originates in neighbouring units, and 80% would choose a smoke-free building if the choice existed.⁷

Whereas Ontarians spend most of their time at home, and it is in this environment where exposure continues to be reported.

Whereas Indoor air studies show that, depending on the age and construction of a building, up to 65% of the air in a private residence can come from elsewhere in the building⁸ and no one should be unwilling exposed or forced to move due to unwanted second-hand smoke exposure.

Whereas second-hand smoke in multi-unit housing can lead to third-hand tobacco exposure as semi-volatile and volatile organic chemicals like nicotine and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (carcinogens, also known as PAHs) are oily or waxy and more likely to stick to surfaces than be removed by ventilation.

Therefore be it resolved that _____ **[name of organization] endorses the following actions and policies to reduce the exposure of second-hand smoke in multi-unit housing:**

- (1) Encourage all landlords and property owners of multi-unit housing to voluntarily adopt no-smoking policies in their rental units or properties;
- (2) All future private sector rental properties and buildings developed in Ontario should be smoke-free from the onset;
- (3) Encourage public/social housing providers to voluntarily adopt no-smoking policies in their units and/or properties;
- (4) All future public/social housing developments in Ontario should be smoke-free from the onset.
- (5) Encourage the Ontario Ministry of Housing to develop government policy and programs to facilitate the provision of smoke-free housing.

Signatory Official (please print name and title)

Organization/Agency/Institution

Signature: _____

Date: _____

⁴ <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/default.asp> Accessed August 17 2010

⁵ Health Canada, 2004. "Cigarette Smoke: It's Toxic." Second-hand Smoke: FAQs & Facts. 2004. www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hlvs/tobac-tabac/second/fact-fait/tox/index_e.html (Accessed Jan. 2006)

⁶ Makomaski-Illing EM and Kaiserman MJ, 1999. Mortality attributable to tobacco use in Canada and its regions- 1998. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 1999; 95(1):38-44. www.cpha.ca/shared/cjph/archives/abstr04.htm#38-44 (Accessed Dec. 2005)

⁷ Smoke-Free Housing Ontario. 80% of People Living in Apartments, Condos and Co-ops Want to Live Smoke Free. Press release 8December 2011. <http://www.newswire.ca/en/story/892061/80-of-people-living-in-apartments-condos-and-coops-want-to-live-smoke-free>.

⁸ "Second-hand smoke in Multi-Unit Dwellings." Non-Smokers' Rights Association (2011). Available from <http://www.nsr-aadnf.ca/cms/page1433.cfm>.