

# Smoke-free Housing Co-operatives



Many families wait years to get access to co-operative housing only to find that they are involuntarily exposed to second-hand smoke (SHS) on a regular basis. Co-ops have the opportunity to change this and protect members from SHS.

Smoke free housing policies are increasingly becoming a social norm. Over 80% of Ontarians are non-smokers and 75% of homes are now voluntarily smoke-free.

Because there is no safe level of exposure to SHS - it contains over 60 carcinogens and has both short and long-term negative health consequences, going smoke-free makes a lot of sense. It exacerbates conditions such as angina and asthma, and over the long term substantially increases the risk for heart disease and several cancers.

It would not be acceptable to allow any other substance this dangerous inside members' homes.

Co-op housing should be an affordable, safe community.



## **Benefits of adopting a smoke-free policy in co-op housing include:**

- Provides a safer and healthier environment for members and staff
- Saves money: keeps co-op homes in a state of good repair
- Reduces board and staff time spent dealing with second-hand smoke complaints
- Less fire risk
- Offers potential savings with insurance premiums

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## Questions and Answers

### How does the smoke from one unit travel to the next?

Air transfer is a complex process. There are multiple factors including differences in air pressure. It can travel through:

- Ducts, pipes, electrical outlets
- Cable or phone jacks
- Dropped ceilings
- Sinks, countertops
- Windows, doors, walls, floors
- Exhaust fans, recessed lighting

### Is ventilation a solution?

Second-hand smoke is extremely toxic and ventilation is not a solution. According to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating & Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE): “... the only means of effectively eliminating the health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity.”

### What about members who are smokers?

A no smoking policy:

- Does not prohibit smokers from becoming co-op members and signing occupancy agreements
- Does not evict current residents who smoke
- Does not force residents to quit smoking

Members just need to smoke outside—as in workplaces and restaurants.

The vast majority have implemented policies by grandfathering. This means that only new members are affected by the policy. Over time, the co-op will become smoke-free as old members move out and new ones move in.

### Have other co-ops gone smoke-free?

Yes. Conservation Co-op was one of the first non-profits in Canada to implement a no-smoking policy.



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ASHRAE