

There is a Demand for Smoke-Free Housing

Canadians spend two-thirds of their time indoors at home, yet people who live in apartments and condominiums have no protection from drifting second-hand smoke. Second-hand smoke is more than just a nuisance, it is a serious health hazard. Research shows that the more tobacco smoke you are exposed to, the greater the risk to your health. Society needs to recognize drifting second-hand smoke as a serious health risk. A recent survey showed that if given the choice, two-thirds of Ontario residents prefer to live in a smoke-free building.

With one in three Ontarians living in multi-unit dwellings and 80 per cent of Ontarians being non-smokers there is a growing demand for smoke-free buildings. In recent years, builders, landlords and managers in many markets have recognized this fact and have successfully banned smoking with no loss of market share. Globe Agencies, based in Winnipeg, designated over 5000 units smoke-free. They did it because they saw a future of smoke-free living. For those smokers already in their buildings, they initiated the grandfather clause and when they moved their unit became smoke-free. They now have a waiting list for their smoke-free buildings.

Why is second-hand smoke dangerous?

More than 1,000 non-smokers die each year in Canada due to heart disease and cancers caused by second-hand smoke.

If you are a non-smoker, exposure to second-hand smoke increases your chance of lung cancer by 25 %, heart disease by 10%, and cancer of the sinuses, brain, breast, cervix, thyroid, as well as

leukemia and lymphoma.

In children, exposure to second-hand smoke has been linked to sore throats, croup, asthma, bronchitis, middle ear infections, reduced lung function, pneumonia, leukemia and other cancers.

Pregnant women exposed to second-hand smoke have an increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirths or giving birth to low birthweight babies.

Babies who regularly breathe in second-hand smoke have a greater chance of dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Second-hand smoke can cause leukemia in cats; dogs in smoking households have a greater risk of cancer.



Related Links:

Non-Smokers' Rights Association
www.nsra-adnf.ca

Smoke-Free Housing Canada
www.smokefreehousing.ca

The Landlord and Tenant Board
www.ltb.gov.on.ca
1-888-332-3234

SmokeFreeEast
www.smokefreeeast.ca
Connects to current information about the Smoke-Free Ontario Act

Produced and distributed by the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit, Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention Dept. For more information call 613-966-5513 ext. 608 or if long distance call 1-800-267-2803 ext. 608. TTY 613-966-3036 weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. July 2008

Health Unit



Hastings & Prince Edward Counties

Smoke-Free Living in Multi-Unit Dwellings

Is second-hand smoke drifting into your apartment, condo or townhouse?



In Ontario landlords have the legal right to designate apartments, condos or townhouses smoke-free.

Tenants

What tenants need to know

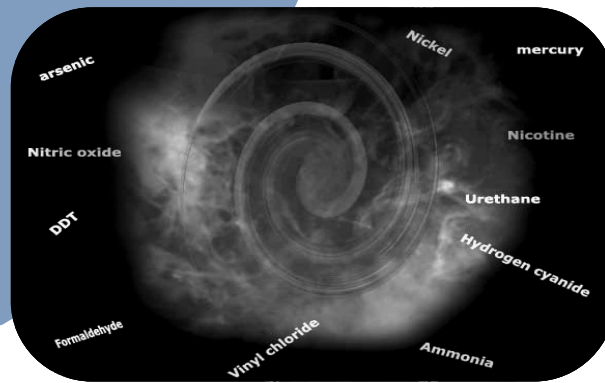
Second-hand smoke is a toxic mix of more than 4,000 chemicals, over 50 of which are known to cause cancer. As well, second-hand smoke can cause heart disease and respiratory illnesses.

Second-hand smoke can drift into your unit through ventilation systems, doorways, windows, balconies, electrical outlets, light fixtures and cracks and gaps in floors and walls.

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke and the only way to eliminate it from indoor air is to remove the source. Air filters, air purifiers and ventilation systems cannot protect you from second-hand smoke.

Benefits of smoke-free buildings

- Protects the health of tenants from poisonous second-hand smoke
- Reduces maintenance costs and fire damage
- Meets market demand for smoke-free buildings
- May reduce insurance costs
- Reduces turnover rates because of dissatisfied tenants



What tenants can do about second-hand smoke drifting into their unit

Identify the source of the drifting smoke

Request your landlord make all reasonable repairs to correct the problem including sealing cracks and upgrading or cleaning filters in ventilation systems

Seek support of other tenants to work together to advocate for a smoke-free building - start a petition or conduct a survey

Talk to your landlord or condominium board about developing smoke-free policies and the benefits of a smoke-free building

Contact the Landlord and Tenant Board - their role is to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants

Landlords

What landlords need to know

Landlords must enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act which came into effect May 31, 2006. This act states smoking is prohibited in common areas of condominiums, apartment buildings and college and university residences. Common areas include elevators, stairwells, hallways, parking garages, laundry facilities, lobbies, exercise areas and party or entertainment rooms.

Landlords must ensure that everyone is aware that smoking is prohibited in common areas by posting **No Smoking** signs in these locations and removing all ashtrays or any object that serves as one. They must make sure no one smokes in these areas. **No Smoking** signs are available from your local health unit office.

Deeming a property smoke-free creates health, safety and economic benefits.

In Ontario landlords have the legal right to designate specific apartment units or entire buildings smoke-free. Landlords may legally include “no smoking” clauses in all new tenancy agreements. A smoke-free policy is no different than a policy that prohibits loud music or has a no-pets rule. For those smokers already in the buildings, landlords can initiate a grandfather clause that allows them to stay. Once they move out, smoking is no longer allowed in that unit.

There is no violation of human rights when a building is declared totally smoke-free. Tenants have the right to “reasonable enjoyment” in their homes, including the right to be free from the unreasonable disturbance of other residents which could include exposure to second-hand smoke.

What landlords can do about second-hand smoke in their building

act on reasonable tenant complaints about second-hand smoke.

Eliminate or minimize second-hand smoke by making reasonable repairs or modifications.

Enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Work with tenants to move toward designating your building smoke-free by converting vacant units into smoke-free units. Make sure you include patios and balconies and state all of this in your lease agreement.