

FINLANDIA VILLAGE

Finlandia Village is located in a park like setting overlooking the north shore of beautiful Lake Ramsey in Sudbury, Ontario. Upon entering the property there is a large sign stating “Smoke-Free Property and Grounds since 2003” for all to see. It is home to 320 residents who can access a full range of services from independent living to the highest level of personal support, delivered in an environment rich with varied cultural backgrounds and the spirit and tradition of the Village’s Finnish founders. It was established by the Sudbury Finnish Rest Home Society, a not-for-profit organization formed in 1982 to create a rest home with priority rights for aged people of Finnish origin as well as other needy persons.

The Society has seen the growth of Finlandia Village with the opening of the Finlandia Koti Apartments (1985), the Palvelukoti Supportive Housing Apartments (1992), the Rivitalo Life-Lease Townhouses (1995 & 2006), the Hoivakoti Nursing Home (2000) and the Majatalo Shared Seniors Housing (2007).

Two of these buildings are entirely smoke-free; the nursing home in compliance with the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*, and the shared seniors housing design inspired by a traditional Finnish farm house. This two-story structure built in 2007 can house up to eight individuals with each floor accommodating four bedrooms with en suite facilities and a common room/kitchen area. The fact that the building was newly built with shared common spaces helped ease the decision to make it 100% smoke-free.

Concern for the health and well-being of its senior citizen tenants inspired the voluntary Board of Directors to adopt their no-smoking policy on the grounds. The Board also felt strongly about promoting a healthy environment beyond the provincially-legislated 9 metre smoke-free buffer zone around entrances and exits of health-care facilities.

Besides the main smoke-free property sign that greets people upon entering the property there are also several smaller smoke-free property signs mounted on street lamps illuminating the walkways. Enforcement has not been a problem as they have chosen to take an informal approach with the expectation of non-smoking as the norm.

Smoking on the property sometimes occurs when the common areas are rented out for local training events, but common courtesy prevails when guests are advised that the grounds are smoke-free. Some smokers then choose to go off-site or to their vehicle to smoke.

As part of their employees’ collective agreement, a controlled smoking area for staff only was created, as is permitted under the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*. This solution has worked well as now the employees who smoke know where they can go, and do not risk further harm by standing alongside the dangerous roadway. The controlled smoking area is located behind the main buildings and has a couple of tables and benches and receptacles for cigarette butts and garbage. A request for a roof to provide shelter during bad weather was denied when cost estimates to build one strong enough to take the snow load from a Sudbury winter came in at about \$5,000. Cleaning is the responsibility of the maintenance department but smokers are also encouraged to clean up after themselves.



Communication is the key to a successful transition to a no-smoking policy—along with a long-term view. The process can take two to three years to implement. Talking about the reasons for the policy with all stakeholders (residents, tenants, Board members, families and employees) is also critical. The issue is still discussed at regular tenants/residents and employee meetings. No one can really argue against the policy as it is positioned as a health issue and about being considerate neighbours.

Based on the success of its current no-smoking policy, Finlandia Village is considering expanding the policy to the apartments and life-lease town homes while remaining cognizant of marketability among their clientele. Until that time they are pleased that provincial legislation has smoothed the way for public acceptance of smoke-free places.

Future plans for expansion at Finlandia Village include applying to build new smoke-free supportive housing units when the provincial government next releases funding opportunities. The leases would include the no-smoking policy upon intake, and the fact that everything in the units would be new is a sure catalyst for success.