



Region of Waterloo

PUBLIC HEALTH

Environmental Health and Lifestyle Resources

Date: March 3, 2009

MEMORANDUM

To: Regional Chair Ken Seiling and Members of Council

From: Mary Sehl, Manager, Tobacco Programs, and Irwin Peters, Manager, Waterloo Region Housing

Subject: **RESULTS OF SURVEY ON SECOND-HAND SMOKE IN REGIONALLY OWNED HOUSING**

In follow up to PH-08-034 (Second-hand Smoke in Regionally Owned Multi-unit Dwellings), we are providing the attached summary of the results of a survey of tenants in Waterloo Region Housing and Region of Waterloo Community Housing Incorporated (ROWCHI) conducted from October 20 to November 7, 2008.

Following further consultation with tenants, these results will be presented in a future report to Community Services Committee along with policy recommendations.

Representatives of the Housing division of Planning, Housing and Community Services and of Public Health have been meeting with an advisory group of tenants to plan community forums with a sample of residents from each type of housing (family, senior and adult-only). The forums will be supplemented by an on-line consultation with tenants. The attached survey results will be shared with all tenants by mail in advance of the forums and on-line consultation.

Both the forums, anticipated to occur in late April, and on-line consultation will ensure an open process involving residents in discussions about policy options related to second-hand smoke in regionally owned housing. The goal is to create a feasible policy based on tenant input, rather than using a top-down approach. The consultation process will provide tenants with two to three opportunities to express their interests (the survey, on-line consultation, and forums).

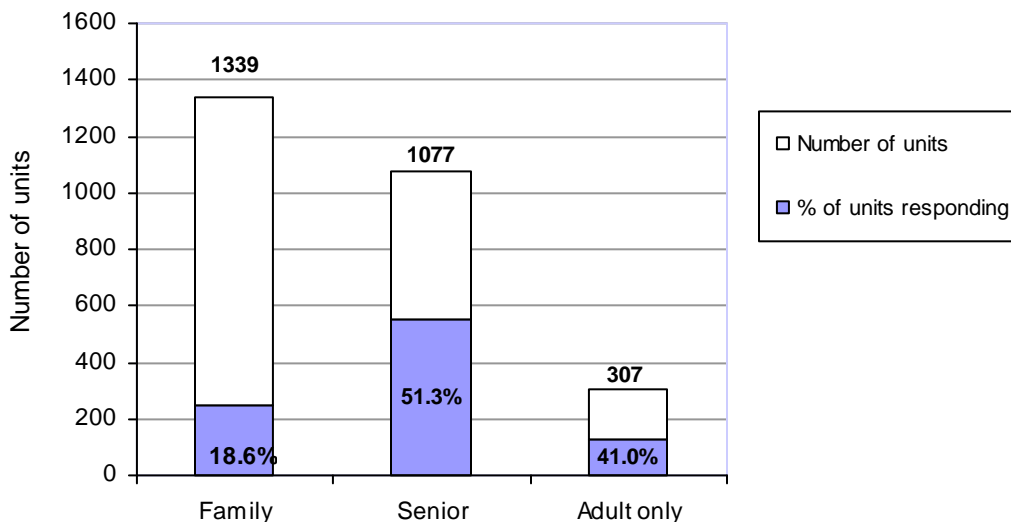
Summary of Survey Results

Methodology

Surveys were sent to all of the 2,723 households served by Waterloo Region Housing and Region of Waterloo Community Housing Incorporated. The survey included an introductory letter in multiple languages, along with information for contacting translating services. Flyers entitled “Have you received your survey?” and “Time is Running Out” were posted on bulletin boards in Waterloo Region Housing offices and seven Waterloo Region Housing community centres.

Nine hundred and sixty-seven (967) completed surveys were returned. This yielded a 36% response rate, a typical representation for mail-out surveys among community samples. A table summarizing all of the results is included in Appendix I. Response rates for family units were low at 18.6%, making it difficult to draw conclusions from this group. Slightly more than half of the senior residences and 41% of adult-only residences submitted responses.

Table 1. Response Rate by Housing Type.



The proportion of smokers in the sample was 21%, slightly lower than the regional average of 22% (Canadian Community Health Survey 3.1, 2007). It is likely that people who smoke are under-represented in the survey sample. Lower incomes are associated with higher incidences of smoking, and it is therefore expected that the smoking rates within community housing should be higher than the regional average.

Key results

Smoking prevalence

Twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents report being smokers, and 6% have someone in their household who smokes. Twenty-five percent (25%) state someone smokes inside their home, and 42% say someone smokes on their balcony or patio.

Divided by housing type, 24% of those living in family units, 18% of those living in seniors units, and 31% of those living in adult units report being smokers. Three percent of non-smokers and

15% of smokers have someone else in their household who smokes. Of those who do not allow smoking inside their home, 7% are smokers.

Exposure to second-hand smoke

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of all respondents report being exposed to second-hand smoke inside their home, 54% report being bothered by it, and 36% report someone in their home has a health condition that is worsened by inhaling second-hand smoke.

Of those who do not allow smoking inside their home, 91% are non-smokers, 65% report being bothered by second-hand smoke, and 53% have been exposed to second-hand smoke inside their home.

Ninety percent (90%) of those in family units, 38% of those in seniors units, and 34% of those in adult units reported that someone in their home has health problems that are made worse from inhaling second-hand smoke.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of smokers report someone smokes inside their home. However, only 53% report that they or other members of their household have been exposed to second-hand smoke inside their home. These numbers point towards the possibility that those who are smoking indoors may not recognize the smoke from their own cigarettes as being second-hand smoke.

Reactions to a Regional smoke-free policy:

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the total respondents want *part* of their housing to be smoke-free (e.g., restricting smoking in one wing, unit or floor of a building or complex), 26% do not, and 7% do not know. When broken down by different categories of respondents, the following percentages of respondents are in favour of a smoke-free policy for part of their housing:

Smokers:	16%
Non-smokers:	69%
Family units:	59%
Seniors units:	57%
Adult units:	48%
Those who allow smoking inside their homes:	24%
Those who do not allow smoking inside their homes:	69%

Half (50%) of total respondents want *all* housing units to be smoke-free, including balconies and patios, 37% do not, and 13% do not know. When broken down by different categories of respondents, the following percentages of respondents are in favour of 100% smoke-free buildings, including balconies and patios:

Smokers:	4%
Non-smokers:	64%
Family units:	54%
Seniors units:	51%
Adult units:	45%
Those who allow smoking inside their homes:	11%
Those who do not allow smoking inside their homes:	64%

Slightly more than half (52%) of total respondents believe the Region of Waterloo should make a smoke-free policy for Region of Waterloo-owned community housing units, 34% do not, and 15% do not know. When broken down by different categories of respondents, the following percentages of individuals are in favour of a smoke-free policy for Region of Waterloo-owned community housing units:

Smokers:	4%
Non-smokers:	66%
Family units:	54%
Seniors units:	52%
Adult units:	48%
Those who allow smoking inside their homes:	12%
Those who do not allow smoking inside their homes:	66%

The percentage of respondents who believe the Region should create a smoke-free policy is similar to the percentage who want *all* housing units to be smoke-free, including balconies and patios. It is slightly lower than the percentage who want housing buildings and complexes to be partially smoke-free. These findings suggest respondents may have been cautious about what a smoke-free policy would entail, and therefore responded to this question based on the most extreme policy option (i.e., entirely smoke-free housing, including balconies and patios).

Overall, 36% of respondents (10% of smokers and 43% of non-smokers) would be concerned if the Region of Waterloo introduced a smoke-free policy that included a clause allowing tenants to smoke in their units for the remainder of their lease. This is sometimes known as “lifetime grandfathering.” The numbers were fairly similar across housing types; 34% of those living in family units, 37% of those in seniors units, and 33% of those in adult units say they would be concerned if a lifetime grandfathering clause were permitted in a smoke-free policy.

Awareness about health effects of second-hand smoke:

Overall, 81% of respondents believe second-hand smoke is harmful to a person's health, 9% do not believe it is harmful, and 10% do not know. However, when smokers were asked, only 46% believed it was harmful, 27% did not believe it was harmful, and 22% did not know. Similarly, of those who allowed smoking within their home, 50% believed second-hand smoke is harmful to their health, 26% did not believe it was harmful, and 22% did not know. When asked if they would like to learn more about second-hand smoke, 6% of smokers and 12% of those who allowed smoking in their homes wanted information.

Conversely, 90% of non-smokers and 91% of those who did not allow smoking inside their homes believe second-hand smoke is harmful to one's health and are more likely to be interested in learning more (22% of non-smokers and 20% of those who do not allow smoking in their home wanted further information).

Next step: community forums and on-line consultation

A mail-out summarizing the survey results will be sent to all tenants at the end of March. Tenants from a sample of properties selected to represent each type of housing and different geographic areas of the region will be invited to participate in community forums.

The purpose of these forums will be to:

- Present survey data and information about the issue
- Foster policy dialogue
- Gain a more indepth understanding of the survey results
- Elicit feedback from people who were under-represented in the survey results (for example, residents in family units, which had a 19% response rate; people who smoke, who had lower representation in the survey results than would be expected based on regional smoking rates).

The mail-out to tenants will include information about an on-line consultation on policy options for addressing second-hand smoke in regionally owned housing. While it is recognized that not

all tenants will have access to or familiarity with the internet, the web-based consultation will be used to supplement the community forums. It will provide tenants not included in the sample attending the forums with another way to provide feedback on policy options. A web page located on the Waterloo Region Housing website will provide information shared at the forums, including a selection of policy alternatives for addressing second-hand smoke in regionally owned housing. Tenants will be able to indicate their preferred policy option.

Appendix 1. Responses: Overall, and by housing type

Question		Overall (%)	Family (%)	Senior (%)	Adult (%)
1. Do you smoke?	Yes	21	24	18	31
	No	75	74	79	65
2. Does any other member of your household smoke?	Yes	6	10	3	8
	No	87	88	89	81
3. Does anyone smoke inside your home?	Often	7	6	6	15
	Sometimes	18	14	17	25
	Never	75	80	77	60
4. Does anyone smoke on your balcony or patio?	Often	9	17	5	11
	Sometimes	32	27	34	37
	Never	58	56	61	53
5. How often are you exposed to second-hand smoke in your home? This may include smoke coming in from outside.	Always	10	10	9	16
	Very often	14	13	13	14
	Sometimes	33	36	32	36
	Never	43	41	46	33
6. Does second-hand smoke bother you or others in your home?	Yes	54	58	52	56
	No	46	42	48	44
7. Do you or others in your home have health problems that worsen from breathing in second-hand smoke?	Yes	36	90	38	34
	No	48	4	48	44
	Don't know	16	5	14	22
8. Do you believe second-hand smoke is harmful to a person's health?	Yes	81	90	78	72
	No	9	4	10	16
	Don't know	10	6	12	12
9. Want some parts of housing community smoke-free? For example, not allowing smoking in one wing or floor in apartment buildings, or in a row of townhouse units.	Yes	57	59	57	54
	No	26	24	24	37
	Don't know	17	17	19	10
10. Would you like your building to be 100% smoke-free, including no smoking on balconies and patios?	Yes	50	54	51	45
	No	37	36	36	47
	Don't know	13	11	14	8
11. Do you think the Region of Waterloo should make a smoke-free policy for Regionally owned Community housing units?	Yes	52	54	52	48
	No	34	29	33	44
	Don't know	15	17	15	8
12. Does it concern you that current tenants may still be allowed to smoke in their units for the remainder of their lease, if the Region of Waterloo changed its current policy to make Regionally owned Community Housing units smoke-free?	Yes	36	34	37	33
	No	49	46	49	53
	Don't know	16	20	14	14
13. Want to know more about?	Quitting smoking	7	8	6	9
	Second-hand smoke?	18	15	18	19
	Not interested	65	72	63	69