

Mr. Kurt Johnson  
Letters Editor  
The Ottawa Citizen  
1101 Baxter Road, Box 5020,  
Ottawa, Ont., K2C 3M4

2008-01-15

Dear Mr. Johnson:

With the celebration of National Non-Smoking Week just around the corner, your editorial “An Environmental Wave” (Ottawa Citizen-2008-Jan-12) caught my attention and I was inspired to write with a special request to all housing developers who are committed to build green homes.

To the Greene housing developers, I commend your passion and desire to develop cleaner living spaces for this community. My request is that at least one housing developer designate at minimum one multi-unit dwelling as 100% smoke-free. This developer will unquestionably be considered a leader in your industry.

There is a huge, untapped market for 100% smoke-free housing in Ottawa. Roughly 83% of the people living in Ottawa do not smoke. A survey commissioned by the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network in 2006/07 revealed that almost two million Ontarians reported that they were exposed to second-hand smoke in their apartments, and that 64% of the respondents reported that they would like the choice to live in smoke-free buildings. The Council believes that green means without drifting toxic gases and carcinogens as well. When a developer goes to all the trouble to design environmentally friendly and healthy living spaces the benefits of making the units entirely smoke-free complete the package.

Globe General Agencies has designated 70 of their high-rise apartment buildings as 100% smoke-free. There are apartment buildings and condominiums in British Columbia and Kenora respectively that have designated themselves as 100% smoke-free. Housing developers in several U.S. states, including California and Michigan are leading the way on this important housing and health issue.

Landlords will reap tremendous cost savings by not allowing smoking on the property. The costs associated with cleaning, painting, replacing carpets, curtains, ceilings and flooring are considerably less in non-smoking residences. The cost of insurance is greatly reduced due to a decreased likelihood of cigarette-related fires. The website of the Ontario Fire Marshall reveals that in 2005, 30% of preventable fires with loss were caused by lit smokers’ materials, matches and/or lighters.

The Council believes that the “Green” environmental building trend should actually be “Greene”:

G – gyprock  
R- radiant heat  
E – efficient fireplace  
E – energy tight  
N – non-toxic glue  
E – environmental tobacco smoke-free



The Council is confident that the demand for these units will be beyond the developer's expectations and that all of the units will sell out before the ground is broken. Which one of you will be the housing developer to make your colleagues "greene" with envy?

"If you build it, they will come".

In support of the information presented herein, may we suggest that you also consult the following websites:

1. A fact sheet developed by the Council on the topic of second hand smoke in multi-unit dwellings. (<http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/2006-en/fact-sheet.pdf> )
2. The Surgeon General's Report, released on June 27, 2006 (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/> )
3. The result from the Ontario Tobacco Free Network survey last spring (<http://www.theotn.org/pastevents.htm> ), please note that it is the second campaign listed.
4. The Non-Smokers Rights Association ([http://www.nsra-adnf.ca/cms/index.cfm?group\\_id=1433](http://www.nsra-adnf.ca/cms/index.cfm?group_id=1433) )
5. The Ontario Fire Marshall's Office (<http://www.ofm.gov.on.ca/english/publications/statistics/fireloss/fireloss12.htm> )

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Holmes".

Ellen Holmes  
Past President  
Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health