



May 1, 2017

Hon Chris Ballard, MPP (NewMarket—Aurora)
Minister of Housing and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy
17th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5
Email: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Dear Hon Minister Ballard:

**Re: Urgent Need for 100% Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing and
Updating the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006**

I am writing on behalf of the Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health (OCSH) regarding the urgent need for 100% smoke-free multi-unit housing. The OCSH receives ongoing complaints from residents who live in multi-unit housing—including seniors with cancer and chronic lung disease, and parents with young, asthmatic children—who are exposed to second-hand tobacco and marijuana smoke.

These individuals tell us that they have no recourse, that their landlord will not assist them, and that they cannot afford to move. They are in a desperate situation. They continually ask us when the City of Ottawa and the Province of Ontario will prohibit smoking inside all multi-unit housing and on balconies, just as they prohibited smoking inside and outside all public places and workplaces. Shared air is shared air, regardless of the type of building.

Local and provincial governments prohibit smoking in public places and workplaces because second-hand smoke kills. **There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke.**¹ No ventilation system can adequately remove the toxins in second-hand smoke. Decades of scientific research proves that second-hand smoke causes cancer and cardiovascular and lung disease. Tobacco use is the leading cause of disease, disability, and death in our community, in Ontario, and across Canada. There is also substantial scientific evidence about the health effects of second-hand smoke from water pipes.^{2,3}

The OCSH receives complaints from residents about second-hand marijuana smoke, which also poses health risks.⁴ Like tobacco smoke, marijuana smoke contains tar and cancer-causing chemicals.⁵ The OCSH is very concerned that the number of complaints will increase after the federal government legalizes the sale of marijuana by July 2018.

Residents of multi-unit housing urgently need legal protection from second-hand smoke, second-hand vapour, and particulate matter from combustible products that are lit and heated. This includes tobacco products, heat-not-burn tobacco products,⁶ marijuana, medical marijuana, tobacco and herbal water pipes, herbal cigarettes, and electronic cigarettes.

During the past 10 years, the OCSH has worked to increase the number of 100% smoke-free multi-unit dwellings in our community because it is a requirement for healthy living. In 2016, the OCSH wrote to the Ontario government to request changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* to allow landlords to enforce 100% smoke-free policies in multi-unit housing: <http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/whats-new/ocsh-submission-to-ontario-ministry-of-municipal-affairs-and-housing-re-residential-tenancies-act-and-smoke-free-housing>.

The OCSH urges the Province of Ontario to take immediate action on this public health and safety issue which is taking a severe toll on the health of thousands of Ontario residents by:

- Increasing the supply of 100% smoke-free multi-unit housing. Currently, the demand for 100% smoke-free housing greatly exceeds the supply.
- Amending the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* so that landlords have the legal right to terminate a tenancy when residents violate no-smoking provisions in leases. The Ontario Ministry of Housing held a consultation in June 2016 that identified this measure as a possible remedy.
- Promoting 100% smoke-free housing to landlords, condominiums, and housing co-operatives. Smoke-free policies lower cleaning and maintenance costs⁷ and reduce the risk of fires.⁸ They create healthier and safer living environments.⁹ In recent months, our community has had several apartment building and balcony fires^{10,11} which Ottawa Fire Services has attributed to smoking materials. These fires were preventable.

Individuals who are addicted to tobacco products and who want to quit will also greatly benefit from 100% smoke-free housing. The scientific evidence is indisputable: 100% smoke-free spaces help smokers to quit and stay smoke-free.¹²

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Carol McDonald
President
Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health
Email: info@smokefreeottawa.com
www.smokefreeottawa.com

cc Hon Kathleen O. Wynne, MPP (Don Valley West), Premier of Ontario
Hon Eric Hoskins, MPP (St. Paul's), Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon Yasir Naqvi, MPP (Ottawa Centre), Attorney General

The OCSH is a volunteer organization that was established in 1978.
Our goals are to: create a social environment where non-smoking is the norm;
to assist in establishing smoke-free environments;
to prevent youth from starting to smoke; to encourage smokers to quit; and
to advocate for better smoking cessation resources.

¹ Health Canada. Second-Hand Smoke. Accessed April 29, 2017.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/legislation/label-etiquette/second-eng.php>

² City of Toronto. Health Risks of Indoor Waterpipe Smoking. Report from the Medical Officer of Health to the Board of Health. March 10, 2014. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-67436.pdf>

³ Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health. Waterpipes. Accessed April 29, 2017.

<http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/waterpipes.html>

⁴ Non-Smokers' Rights Association. Secondhand Marijuana Smoke: Health effects of exposure.

October 2016. <http://nsra-adnf.ca/key-issue/secondhand-marijuana-smoke/>

⁵ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. About Marijuana. Accessed April 28, 2017.

http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/marijuana/Pages/about_marijuana.aspx

⁶ Chaiton M, Schwart R. Heat-Not-Burn Tobacco Products: Claims and Science. Ontario Tobacco Research Unit. November 2016. <http://otru.org/heat-not-burn-tobacco-products-claims-and-science/>

⁷ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Almost \$500 million could be saved annually by making subsidized housing smoke-free. News Release. October 2, 2014.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2014/p1002-smoke-free-housing.html>

⁸ Smoke-Free Housing Ontario. Fire Prevention. Accessed April 28, 2017.

<http://smokefreehousingon.ca/landlords/why-go-smoke-free/fire-prevention/>

⁹ Kennedy RD, Ellens-Clark S, Kaufman P, Douglas O. Smoke-free Housing Policy Evaluation.

Findings of the 2013 Waterloo Region Housing Tenant Survey. Report to the Region of Waterloo Community Services Committee. Waterloo, ON: Propel Centre for Population Health Impact, University of Waterloo. 2013. https://uwaterloo.ca/propel/sites/ca.propel/files/uploads/files/smoke_free_housing_policy_tenant_survey_2013.pdf

¹⁰ The Ottawa Citizen. Ottawa firefighters quickly put out two-alarm blaze downtown. March 18, 2017.

<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawa-firefighters-quickly-put-out-two-alarm-blaze-downtown>

¹¹ Tom Spears. The Ottawa Sun. Pop goes the balcony, but cigarette fire's put out quickly. March 8, 2017.

<http://www.ottawasun.com/2017/03/08/pop-goes-the-balcony-but-cigarette-fires-put-out-quickly>

¹² City of Ottawa. Tobacco. Accessed April 28, 2017.

<http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/public-health/healthy-living/alcohol-drugs-and-tobacco/tobacco>