



Ottawa Council on
Smoking or Health

Conseil d'Ottawa sur le
tabagisme ou la santé

February 17, 2016

Mr. Russell Mills
Chair, National Capital Commission
202-40 Elgin Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 1C7

Dear Mr. Mills:

Re: Request for 100% Smoke-Free Indoor and Outdoor Policy for the Redeveloped LeBreton Flats

The Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health (OCSH) is a local volunteer organization established in 1978. Our goals are to: protect the public from second-hand smoke; prevent youth from starting to smoke; encourage smokers to quit; and advocate for better smoking cessation resources.

We are writing with recommendations regarding the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats. We strongly urge the National Capital Commission (NCC) to adopt a **100% smoke-free policy for all indoor and outdoor working, living and public spaces:**

1. **Prior to construction, make all indoor private and social housing units 100% smoke-free; and prohibit the use of any tobacco or non-tobacco herbal product that can be combusted, lit or heated and that creates smoke, vapor or other harmful fumes (e.g. marijuana, medical marijuana, water pipes, herbal cigarettes, electronic cigarettes).**

A 100% smoke-free policy for all housing units will:

- Protect the health of all residents; reduce disease and disability; and **save lives.**
- Increase the number of smoke-free housing units in our community.
- Send a positive message to the community about healthy housing solutions.
- Encourage other developers and property owners to adopt a 100% smoke-free policy for existing and future multi-unit dwellings (i.e. no grandfather clause).
- Lower cleaning and repair costs.
- Lower insurance rates due to decreased risk of fires.

For the past several years, **involuntary exposure to second-hand tobacco and marijuana smoke in multi-unit dwellings is the number one reason why Ottawa residents contact the OCSH**. We receive heart-breaking letters from individuals of all ages, all of whom are desperate for 100% smoke-free housing:

- Seniors with heart disease and cancer;
- Individuals with lung disease, including asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD);
- A lung transplant patient; and
- Parents with young, asthmatic children.

All of these individuals are involuntarily exposed to second-hand smoke which comes in from adjacent units. Many landlords and property managers do not know that they have the legal right to adopt a 100% smoke-free policy. In many cases, landlords and property managers refuse to address residents' health concerns. In other cases, units occupied by smokers have been grandfathered and are years away from becoming 100% smoke-free, thereby affecting neighbouring units.

We also receive complaints from individuals who are affected by third-hand smoke,¹ which can cause DNA damage and increase the risk of cancer.² Both cigarette smoke and cigarette butts can damage carpets, walls, furniture, and personal belongings.

We invite the NCC to visit our website for more information about this pervasive public health problem and for links to organizations that offer sample legal contracts for 100% smoke-free housing (e.g. Smoke-Free Housing Ontario):

<http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/multi-unit-dwellings.html>.

2. **Prior to construction, make all outdoor public spaces 100% smoke-free; and prohibit the use of any tobacco and non-tobacco herbal product that can be combusted, lit or heated and that creates smoke, vapor or other harmful fumes (e.g. marijuana, medical marijuana, water pipes, herbal cigarettes, electronic cigarettes).**

In 2012, the City of Ottawa adopted a 100% smoke-free bylaw for all outdoor public spaces (e.g. restaurant and bar patios, parks, playgrounds, sports fields) in order to protect workers and the most vulnerable members of the community. We understand that the municipal smoke-free bylaw does not apply to outdoor NCC property. However, the NCC has supported our requests to implement smoke-free policies and signage at local and tourist events (e.g. Winterlude sites, Rideau Canal Skateway) in response to the public complaints that we received (see: <http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/whats-new/ncc-to-install-smoke-free-signage-at-rideau-canal-skateway> and <http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/whats-new/ocsh-thanks-the-national-capital-commission-and-the-city-of-ottawa-for-smoke-free-signage-at-winterlude1>).

A smoke-free policy for all outdoor public and work spaces of the redeveloped LeBreton Flats would significantly enhance this venue which is designed to attract Ottawa residents of all ages, families with young children, and tourists who expect and want to participate in events without exposure to second-hand smoke.

3. **Make the redeveloped LeBreton Flats a 100% smoke-free construction site:**

A 100% smoke-free outdoor policy for the entire construction zone would create a healthier and safer work environment for construction workers. It would also support construction workers who are trying to quit and stay smoke-free. The national smoking rate among construction workers is **34%**.³ In comparison, the national smoking rate among the general population is **17%**.⁴

In 2012, Ottawa Public Health created a smoking cessation pilot program for construction workers as part of the *Let's Clear the Air Strategy*. Ottawa Public Health expanded this successful pilot project to five national sites through funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada.⁵ More and more construction sites, including some in Ottawa, are adopting a 100% smoke-free policy to protect and support workers. Making the entire construction zone for this landmark project 100% smoke-free would set a great example for communities across Canada.

We strongly urge the NCC to adopt a 100% smoke-free policy for **all indoor and outdoor working, living and public spaces during all phases of this major redevelopment project** in order to provide the highest level of protection for workers and for future residents, members of the public, and tourists.

We thank the NCC for considering our comments and our recommendations to protect and promote public health and safety.

Sincerely,

Carol McDonald

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Carmela Graziani

OCSH Secretary

cc: Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson
Ottawa City Council
Ottawa Board of Health
Dr. Isra Levy, Medical Officer of Health, City of Ottawa
The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage, Minister Responsible for the NCC
The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Member of Parliament, Ottawa Centre
Yasir Naqvi, Member of Provincial Parliament, Ottawa Centre
Devcore Canderel DLS Group
RendezVous LeBreton Group

REFERENCES

¹ Ontario Tobacco Research Unit. *Second- and Third-Hand Smoke*. October 2015.
http://otru.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/secondhand_smoke.pdf

² American Chemical Society. "Major 'third-hand smoke' compound causes DNA damage — and potentially cancer." News Release. March 16, 2014.
<http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/pressroom/newsreleases/2014/march/major-third-hand-smoke-compound-causes-dna-damage-and-potentially-cancer.html>

³ Conference Board of Canada. *Briefing 3 Smoking cessation and the workplace. Benefits of workplace programs*. October 2013.
https://www.quitnow.ca/files/QN/files/library/Smoking_Cessation_and_the_Workplace_Briefing_3_Benefits_of_Workplace_Programs.pdf

⁴ Health Canada. *Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS). Summary of Annual Results for 2011*. Retrieved February 10, 2016. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/ctums-esutc_2011/ann_summary-sommaire-eng.php

⁵ Ottawa Public Health. *Report to the Ottawa Board of Health. Approval for Participation in Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Multi Year Funding Agreement for the Construction Industry Tobacco Cessation Project*. April 13, 2015.
<http://app05.ottawa.ca/sirepub/cache/2/nvd20q12cvwqci1fz1dbv2lf/28942602102016015613667.PDF>