

Public Support for Smoke-Free Outdoor Spaces

The Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health (OCSH) believes that policies promoting healthy urban and rural environments as well as active living and wellness will receive widespread community support in the City of Ottawa.

A number of Ontario municipalities including Woodstock, Kingston, Brighton and Thunder Bay, as well as Vancouver, British Columbia and the province of Alberta have enacted smoke-free bylaws for outdoor spaces without community opposition—save a few disgruntled columnists.

The recent adoption of smoke-free bylaws for outdoor spaces throughout North America (*e.g.* Calabasas, California; New York City; Los Angeles) also indicate widespread public acceptance. Five years ago, Calabasas, California adopted a smoke-free bylaw for both indoor and outdoor spaces. The New York Times reported that:

*“The ordinance encountered little resistance. The Chamber of Commerce and the city's restaurant association supported it, as did virtually every citizen who appeared at public hearings. Tobacco lobbyists never weighed in...and a spokesman for Philip Morris, the nation's largest cigarette maker, did not return a reporter's telephone calls Friday.”*¹

A study also found increasing support for smoke-free outdoor spaces in Great Britain and Australasia.²

The OCSH is, however, concerned about the increased demand for the licensing of restaurant and bar patios in Centretown. If these on-street patios are established and permit smoking, there may be resistance from owners to make them smoke-free. Therefore, it is urgent that the City of Ottawa adopt a smoke-free bylaw for outdoor spaces. In our discussion this past summer with a representative of Ottawa restaurateurs, it was clear that **creating a level playing field** for all hospitality businesses was an important consideration for a smoke-free bylaw for outdoor spaces. This was also the case when the City of Ottawa adopted a smoke-free bylaw for indoor public places and workplaces in 2001.

PUBCO was the most vocal opponent during the Smoke-Free Ottawa campaign ten years ago. It was later revealed that PUBCO was funded and supported by the tobacco industry. If this group

¹ Broder, John M. *Smoking Ban Takes Effect Indoors and Out*. The New York Times. March 19, 2006. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/19/national/19smoke.html?_r=2

² Global Smoke-Free Partnership. *The Trend Towards Smoke-Free Outdoor Areas*. FCTC Article 8-plus Series. December 2009. Page 5. http://www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org/resources/ficheiros/SF_Outdoors.pdf

were to resurface and once again receive funding and support from the tobacco industry, it would not sit well with the public and the press—especially considering current widespread support for smoke-free environments. Even local print and broadcast media (e.g. Ottawa Citizen) have changed their opinion of healthy public policy related to tobacco control from being unsupportive to supportive.

In fact, the greatest risk is NOT adopting a smoke-free bylaw for outdoor spaces. ***There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke and even brief exposure to second-hand smoke poses a serious health risk.***³ A recent study conducted on behalf of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada and the OCSH revealed that the average levels of hazardous pollutants in second-hand smoke in outdoor spaces can be comparable to those measured indoors when people smoke.⁴ Furthermore, smoke-free bylaws for outdoor spaces can help to reduce butt litter and protect the environment, marine life and waterways.⁵

Ten years ago, the City of Ottawa became an international leader on tobacco control by adopting smoke-free bylaws for indoor public places and workplaces. The City of Ottawa has since fallen far behind hundreds of other jurisdictions across Canada and the U.S. that have adopted smoke-free bylaws for outdoor spaces.

It is the opinion of the OCSH that decision-makers in the City of Ottawa should not be cowed by the few who may object to a smoke-free bylaw for outdoor spaces. This is a significant health issue for outdoor workers and members of the public, including children, the elderly, and individuals with lung disease, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions. The OCSH firmly believes that this is an “equal access” issue for *all* members of our community. Everyone deserves to breathe smoke-free outdoor air.

Respectfully Submitted,

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³ *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General.* Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2010. www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/tobaccosmoke/index.html

⁴ *Smoke-Free Outdoors: A Positive Step that the City of Ottawa Can Take to Protect Children, Hospitality Workers and the Community from Tobacco Smoke.* Dr. Ryan Kennedy, PhD., University of Waterloo, August 25, 2010. www.smokefreeottawa.com/2006-en/pdfs/newsConferenceBackgrounder.pdf

⁵ Global Smoke-Free Partnership. The Trend Towards Smoke-Free Outdoor Areas. FCTC Article 8-plus Series. December 2009. Page 3. http://www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org/resources/ficheiros/SF_Outdoors.pdf