



February 23, 2011

Ms. Marie Lemay
Chief Executive Officer
National Capital Commission
202-40 Elgin Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 1C7

RE: Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke at Winterlude

Dear Ms. Lemay:

The Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health (OCSH) is a local volunteer group that aims to protect individuals from second-hand smoke (SHS); to prevent youth from starting to smoke; to encourage smokers to quit; and to advocate for better smoking cessation resources.

We are writing to you to express our concern about involuntary exposure to SHS at the Rogers Crystal Garden and the International Ice-Carving Competition at Confederation Park during Winterlude 2011.

Winterlude venues are hugely popular, drawing thousands of Ottawa residents and tourists of all ages. In the context of the National Capital Commission's desire to reduce any risks to the public during Winterlude, we thought it important to draw your attention to health issues posed by smoking at Winterlude venues.

While attending a recent Winterlude event, I noticed one of the demonstration sculptors smoking as he sculpted under the roof, polluting the air around him. In addition, a few people were smoking as they stood under the roof, further contributing to the toxic air.

Numerous health studies, including the 2010 Report by the U.S. Surgeon General, show that there is *no safe level of exposure to SHS* and that even brief exposure to SHS poses a serious health risk.¹ Also, 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 SHS in outdoor spaces can be comparable to those measured indoors when people smoke.²

¹ *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

² *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

Smoking at Winterlude venues poses a serious health hazard for children, pregnant women, the elderly and individuals with asthma, heart disease, cancer, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, diabetes and other health conditions. The OCSH believes that everyone should have equal access to clean outdoor air while enjoying Winterlude activities.

Declaring Winterlude a smoke-free event would provide an enormous health benefit. Many communities in Canada— including Kingston, Saskatoon, Vancouver, Toronto, Belleville, Barrie, and all of Nova Scotia, Alberta and the Yukon—have already declared various outdoor spaces as smoke-free. Many jurisdictions in the United States are also adopting smoke-free policies for outdoor public places. For example, New York City recently adopted a smoke-free policy for Central Park. Furthermore, the OCSH is aware of another outdoor festival in Ottawa that has adopted a smoke-free policy.

The NCC's website states that the NCC is "committed to demonstrating excellence and leadership on issues related to the environment." The website also states that the NCC's *Environmental Strategy* includes "reducing waste and preventing pollution." A smoke-free policy would significantly reduce butt litter and prevent environmental pollution at Winterlude venues such as the Rideau Canal Skateway and Confederation Park. A smoke-free policy would fit well with the NCC's *Environmental Strategy* and would serve as a wonderful model for other community and special events in our city.

Given the popularity of Winterlude among Ottawa residents—especially families with young children—the OCSH urges the NCC to consider adopting a smoke-free policy for all Winterlude venues.

We would be happy to discuss this issue in more detail with the NCC.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Friedlaender
President, Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health

cc: Diane Holmes, Ottawa City Councillor, Somerset Ward