



December 7, 2018

Ms. Cheryl Jensen
President
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Ottawa Campus
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Re: Algonquin College's Permanent Policy Banning the Use of Tobacco Products, Cannabis, and Electronic Smoking Devices on Campus

We are writing on behalf of the members of the Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health (OCSH), 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.

The OCSH fully supports Algonquin College's proposed permanent policy banning the use of tobacco products, cannabis, and electronic smoking devices on any college property as of January 1, 2019.¹

It was very disheartening to follow media interviews today with some Algonquin College students who promoted smoking as a way to reduce stress^{2,3} because smoking destroys lungs and causes cancer. The OCSH is very concerned that the health risks associated with smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke are not being communicated to students.

We urge Algonquin College to do its utmost to provide **smoking cessation support** to students and employees and to **educate students and employees about the deadly risks associated with smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke**. Some facts to consider:

- There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke—even outdoors.⁴
- Smoke-free policies help smokers to quit and stay smoke-free.⁵

- The most common cause of Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (COPD), a progressive and irreversible lung disease, is smoking.⁶
- COPD is the leading cause of hospitalization in the Champlain region (Eastern Ontario).⁷
- COPD is one of the top three reasons for hospital readmissions within 30 days within the Champlain region.⁸
- More than 1 in 10 people in Ontario have COPD, and in Ontario, **COPD is the second-most common reason for hospitalization, after childbirth.**⁹
- Cannabis smoke contains **33 of the same carcinogens** that are in tobacco smoke.¹⁰
- “The inhalation of smoke is harmful to lung health as the combustion of materials releases toxins and carcinogens. These are released regardless of the source—whether it is burning wood, tobacco or marijuana.”¹¹
- Health Canada warns that many of the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke are also found in marijuana smoke,¹² some of which are at even higher concentrations.¹³
- “The confirmation of the presence, in both mainstream and sidestream smoke of marijuana cigarettes, of known carcinogens and other chemicals implicated in respiratory diseases is important information for public health and communication of the risk related to exposure to such materials.”¹⁴

COPD rates are increasing.¹⁵ Students who are addicted to smoking today are at risk of becoming COPD patients in the future. Many COPD patients have high rates of repeated emergency department visits and hospitalizations, and many COPD patients require medications, respiratory rehabilitation, oxygen therapy, and palliative care as the disease progresses.¹⁶

The OCSH urges Algonquin College to steadfastly promote and enforce 100% smoke-free policies for all indoor and outdoor spaces on all college property in order to:

- protect all students, employees and visitors;
- prevent acute and chronic diseases; and
- reduce morbidity and mortality rates in our community.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

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cc: Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health, City of Ottawa

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<https://www.champlainlunghealthnetwork.com/>
<http://champlainlunghealth.ca/>
https://www.champlainhealthline.ca/healthlibrary_docs/BreathingEasier2014.pdf

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/algonquin-college-cannabis-campus-update-1.4935215>

³ The Rick Gibbons Show – Hour 1. News 1310. Interview with Deijanelle Simon - President, Algonquin Students' Association. December 7, 2018. <https://www.1310news.com/audio/the-rick-gibbons-show/>

⁴ Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health. Campaign Documents: Smoke-Free outdoor Spaces Bylaw.
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