



October 29, 2012

Mr. Mark Monahan
Executive/Artistic Director
RBC Royal Bank Bluesfest Ottawa
265 Catherine Street (2nd Floor)
Ottawa, ON K1R 7S5

Mr. Jean-François Trépanier
Interim Chief Executive
National Capital Commission
202-40 Elgin Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 1C7

Re: 100% Smoke-Free Policy for Bluesfest

Dear Mr. Monahan and Mr. Trépanier:

The Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health (OCSH) is a local volunteer organization 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.

We are writing to urge the National Capital Commission (NCC) and RBC Royal Bank Bluesfest Ottawa to adopt a 100% smoke-free policy, beginning in 2013, to protect all Bluesfest attendees, performers, workers and volunteers from second-hand smoke.

The OCSH advocated for the City of Ottawa's smoke-free outdoor bylaw which came into effect on April 2, 2012. We understand that Bluesfest is held on NCC property and therefore falls outside the jurisdiction of the City of Ottawa's smoke-free outdoor bylaw.

The OCSH continues to receive complaints from the public regarding exposure to second-hand smoke at Bluesfest. **Studies show that there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke, even outdoors.** The 2010 U.S. Surgeon General Report states that second-hand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer.¹ The toxic level of second-hand smoke can be as high as in a smoke-filled room and even brief exposures to second-hand smoke can pose serious health risks.² Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Ottawa.³ It costs \$40 million per year to treat Ottawa residents hospitalized for diseases related to smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke.⁴

The OCSH commends Bluesfest for adopting strong health, accessibility and environmental policies to prevent volunteers from smoking while on duty, to assist patrons with disabilities by improving wheelchair accessibility, and to provide free supervised bicycle parking. We also commend the NCC and Bluesfest for ensuring that the Ottawa Folk Festival remains a 100% smoke-free event.

The OCSH urges Bluesfest to be even more progressive and to adopt a 100% smoke-free policy, beginning next year, to create a healthier, more accessible and more environmentally-friendly event. A 100% smoke-free policy would:

- Protect all Bluesfest workers, volunteers, performers and patrons, especially children under the age of 10 who are admitted free.



Credit: Ottawa, ON, July 4, 2012
Aymara Alvarado and his son Kilean 3yrs listen to
Tangerine Dream on the main stage. Opening
Night of Ottawa Bluesfest
(Chris Mikula/The Ottawa Citizen)
<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/story.html?id=6885041>

- Reduce the risk of breast cancer due to second-hand smoke exposure among young adult women⁵ who attend and volunteer at Bluesfest.
- Ensure that Bluesfest is accessible to all members of the public, including individuals with asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), heart disease, cancer, and other chronic health conditions affected by second-hand smoke.
- Enjoy widespread support from the public and tourists.⁶
- Create positive role modeling for children and youth. Smoke-free environments help to prevent youth from starting to smoke and encourage individuals who have quit to stay smoke-free.
- Enhance Bluesfest's reputation as an environmentally friendly event by eliminating pollution from toxic, non-biodegradable cigarette butt litter,⁷ especially given the festival's proximity to the Ottawa River. Cigarette butts are the number one form of litter recovered along beaches and shorelines in Canada.⁸ Cigarette butts pose a risk to our drinking water supply because wind and rain

carry butts into street drains and local waterways.⁹ Cigarette butts also pose a risk to birds, fish and other wildlife.¹⁰

- Catch up to other festivals and major events in Ottawa that have already adopted a 100% smoke-free policy (e.g. HOPE Volleyball Summerfest, TD Ottawa Jazz Festival, Ottawa International Children's Festival, Tim Hortons Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival) and help to create a level playing field among all local festivals.
- Enhance the NCC's Environmental Strategy.¹¹
- Enhance RBC's Corporate Sponsorship Program, which focuses on making "a positive social impact in the communities we serve," and which supports programs that foster "a culture of water stewardship," children's mental health, and sports.¹² All of these programs are in keeping with smoke-free living and smoke-free environments.
- Reduce the risk of outdoor fires during drought-stricken summers, as the City of Ottawa experienced in 2012.

The OCSH would be pleased to meet with the NCC and Bluesfest to discuss this important public health initiative and to lend our support for the adoption and implementation of a 100% smoke-free policy beginning in 2013.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carol McDonald
President
Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health
www.smokefreeottawa.com

cc: Honourable Jim Watson, Mayor, City of Ottawa
Ottawa City Councillor Diane Holmes, Chair, Ottawa Board of Health
Ottawa City Councillor Mark Taylor, Chair, Community and Protective Services Committee
The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister Responsible for the NCC
Mr. Gordon M. Nixon, President and Chief Executive Officer, RBC Royal Bank
Mr. Jason Sordi, Director of Market Development, Ontario North and East, RBC Royal Bank
Dr. Isra Levy, Medical Officer of Health, City of Ottawa

REFERENCES

- ¹ U.S Department of Health & Human Services. *A Report of the Surgeon General: How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease - The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease Fact Sheet*. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/tobaccosmoke/factsheet.html>
- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Exposure to Tobacco Smoke Causes Immediate Damage, says New Surgeon General's Report*, News Release, December 9, 2010. www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/12/20101209a.html
- ³ Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network. *Annual Report 2010-2011*. University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Ottawa, 2011, p. 16. www.ccpnetwork.ca/documents/FINALCCPNAR1011_000.pdf
- ⁴ Ottawa Public Health. *Report to Board of Health. Let's Clear the Air. A Renewed Strategy for a Smoke-Free Ottawa*. February 6, 2012, p. 4. http://www.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/obh/2012/02-06/Smoke_free_Ottawa_EN.htm
- ⁵ Collishaw NE, Boyd NF, Cantor KP, Hammond SK, Johnson KC, Millar J, et al. *Canadian Expert Panel on Tobacco Smoke and Breast Cancer Risk*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Tobacco Research Unit, OTRU Special Report Series, 2009. http://www.otru.org/pdf/special/expert_panel_tobacco_breast_cancer.pdf
- ⁶ Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health. Fact Sheet. *Ottawa Residents and Tourists Support Smoke-Free Outdoor Spaces*. January 2012. <http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/uploads/1/1/7/4/11742147/sfos1.pdf>
- ⁷ Ottawa Council on Smoking and Health. Fact Sheet. *From the Sidewalk and the Street to the Beach and the River: The Economic and Environmental Costs of Cigarette Butt Litter*. January 2012. <http://www.smokefreeottawa.com/uploads/1/1/7/4/11742147/sfos2.pdf>
- ⁸ Great Canadian Shore Clean Up. *Plastic bags and cigarette butts: new data from TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup finds perception "butts" reality*, news release, August 20, 2008. www.canadianshorelinecleanup.wordpress.com/2008/10/22/plastic-bags-vs-cigarette-butts/
- ⁹ Novotny, TE et al. *Cigarettes Butts and the Case for an Environmental Policy on Hazardous Cigarette Waste*. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2009 May 6(5)1691-1705. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2697937/>
- ¹⁰ Gina Jacobs, "Cigarette Butts Toxic to Marine Life. New SDSU research shows that left-over chemicals leach into the environment and kill fish," San Diego State University News Centre, May 1, 2009. www.universe.sdsu.edu/sdsu_newscenter/news.aspx?s=71209
- ¹¹ National Capital Commission. *2011-2012 Annual Environmental Report. Building a Greener Capital*. http://www.canadascapital.gc.ca/sites/default/files/pubs/enviro_report_e_final_2011-12_0.pdf
- ¹² RBC. *Community & Sustainability*. <http://www.rbc.com/community-sustainability/community/index.html>