

London Medical Community Statement on Proposed Smoking Control By-law

London - As members of the Medical Community we are not in the habit of getting involved in political decisions, however in view of the enormous health repercussions in this issue we believe it is imperative that City Council members hear our position on the proposed smoking by-law.

As medical practitioners we are on the front lines. Everyday we see firsthand the tragic effects of our society's widespread addiction to tobacco. In Ontario, 10,297 males and 5,515 females die each year from smoking related illnesses. It is estimated that 139 non-smokers also die in Ontario each year from diseases related to second-hand smoke (*Makomaski Illing, E.M. & Kaiserman, M.J., "Mortality Attributable to Tobacco Use in Canada and Its Regions, 1994 and 1996," CDIC Vol. 20-3, 1999, Health Canada*). The proposed by-law currently under consideration could reduce those numbers and should be enacted on January 1, 2002 as planned.

The issue here is two-fold. First, allowing anyone to work in an environment where smoking is permitted creates an unacceptable health risk. Secondly, any by-law that encourages the view that smoking in an area that puts other members of the public at risk is acceptable must be opposed by anyone that can see the true long-term cost.

The facts are clear and undisputed. According to Health Canada, smoking is the Number One preventable cause of death in Canada, and second-hand smoking is the Number Three preventable cause of death (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/healthpromotion). To put this in perspective, it means that for every eight smokers that tobacco kills, it takes one non smoker with them (*Glantz, S.A. & Parmley, W., "Passive Smoking and Heart Disease: Epidemiology, Physiology, and Biochemistry," Circulation, 1991; 83(1):1-12*). This is clearly unacceptable.

Tobacco industry representatives have clearly stated that a 100% smoke-free by-law has a dramatic effect on reducing the sales of tobacco products and increasing the rates of those who stop smoking. Employees of bars have a risk of cancer that is more than double that of most other employees. A non-smoking employee in a busy bar will inhale the equivalent of as many as 16 cigarettes in an 8-hour shift. (*Katharine Hammond, Ph.D., assoc. professor of environmental health sciences, UC Berkeley School of Public Health, 1996*). This is an unacceptable cost of employment, and an unnecessary one. Recent scientific studies have shown that sidestream smoke has significantly higher concentrations of many of the toxic and carcinogenic poisons than primary smoke. (*Surgeon General's Report, U.S. 1986; K.H. Ginzler, MD, "Hazards Smokers Impose." New Jersey Medicine, April 1990, p312; J.E. Cuddleback, J.R. Donovan, W.R. Burg, "Occupational aspects of passive smoking," American Industrial Hygiene Association Journal, 37, 1976, p 263*).

Society has steadily moved to eliminate the poisons present in second hand smoke from the indoor air of airplanes, theatres, shopping areas, offices and factories. For the hospitality industry to ask for an exemption from these protective restrictions is, quite frankly, immoral. No business should be allowed to threaten the health of their employees, or their customers for the sake of profits.

As for smokers, segregating them into Designated Smoking Areas where the deadly poisons of cigarette smoke may be in higher concentrations is unfair to them as customers and as human beings who we care about. It is also clearly unfair to the employees who must serve them, particularly those who do not smoke.

Cigarette smoking is our number one health enemy. A 100% smoke free by-law in restaurants sends a clear message to the tobacco industry, to business owners, to smokers and to our children that smoking is no longer acceptable particularly when it puts others, who choose not to smoke, at risk. Therefore we as members of the London Medical Community respectfully request that London City Council follow the lead of other progressive health-conscious Ontario communities such as Ottawa, Waterloo, and Peterborough and pass a by-law that eliminates smoking in restaurants as of January 1, 2002, with the goal of a smoke-free London in the very near future.

Thank you

Consent Form: I agree with this statement. Please add my name to the list of public supporters.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Title: _____ Email: _____

**Fax to 661-5933 or
433-2722
by 10:00 am Thursday November 22, 2001**