

Dear Editor

Detractors of the new smoke-free bylaw are missing the point. They seem to forget that smoke-free bylaws are there primarily as a public health measure to protect people from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. After all, second hand smoke is more toxic than the smoke inhaled directly by smokers. The reason is because this smoke is emitted at a lower temperature, which results in incomplete combustion, and because the particles of secondhand smoke are smaller thus breathed deeper into the lungs. The fact that a non-smoker can inhale 10 times more carbonylic compounds than the smoker inhales directly, and that some human carcinogens are more than 30 times more concentrated in sidestream smoke illustrates this quite clearly. This second-hand smoke contains hundreds of chemicals, at least 43 of which are known carcinogens.

Many of the most vocal antagonists say they oppose the bylaw because they care about the economic welfare of hospitality industry staff. Rubbish. If they care so much about hospitality industry staff, they would not advocate making breathing cigarette smoke a condition of employment. However, if they had their way, their beloved staff would have no other option than to work in an environment that is hazardous to their health. Come to think of it, they probably don't acknowledge that second hand smoke levels are higher in restaurants and bars (2 to 6 times) than in offices or that the risk of lung cancer is 50% higher among workers in the food industry. In fact, studies have shown that a nonsmoker bartender working in an unventilated bar may breathe in as much benzo(a)pyrene and carbon monoxide in eight hours as someone who has smoked 1.5 packets of cigarettes.

Further, all independent studies\* on the subject have concluded that restaurants **do not suffer revenue losses** after becoming smoke-free and that several restaurants have even seen increases in revenue.

Exposure to secondhand smoke has nothing to do with the operation of "market forces". It's a question of public health that should be treated on the same level as other sanitary and safety standards. Rather than stepping back, all municipalities should rally and introduce tough smoke-free bylaws. Ultimately the solution may lie in a province-wide, across-the-board ban that would eliminate the fear of some restaurant owners that their customers who smoke will turn to their competitors.

Regards,

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\* **The studies referred to include those by:**

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