

Why a Smoke-Free Housing Month?

While British Columbians are protected from second-hand smoke in virtually all indoor workplaces and public places, including many outdoor venues, thousands living in apartments and condos are regularly exposed in their own homes as a result of smoke infiltration from neighbouring units. This campaign hopes to raise awareness about the critical shortage of smoke-free housing in BC despite strong public demand for 100% smoke-free apartments and condos.

As part of this campaign, the Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & Yukon) and the BC Lung Association commissioned a survey of BC Real Estate Agents on the impacts of smoking on the resale value of homes. The results are in and provide more good reasons for landlords, strata corporations and property managers to go 100% smoke-free. Key findings include:

- **76 percent of BC REALTORS® say the resale value of homes is lower if the current owners smoke.** Of these, 55 percent say the resale value is lowered by less than 10% - while close to 30% say it lowers the resale value by 10 to 19%.
- **70 percent of BC REALTORS® say that most prospective buyers are unwilling or less likely to purchase a home where owners have smoked.**
- **77 percent of BC REALTORS® agree that it is more difficult to sell a home where the current owners smoke.**

These are the findings of an independent survey of 200 REALTORS® in British Columbia conducted by the Leger Research Intelligence Group between April 30 and May 5, 2015. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of +/- 6.9 percent, 19 times out of 20.

TOP Reasons for Going Smoke-Free in Apartments & Condos

- **More and more British Columbians are living on top of one another – in condos and apartments.** Today 45 percent of British Columbians are living in multi-unit housing, whether due to affordability, down-sizing or personal choice. This includes 62 percent in greater Vancouver, and 76 percent in the City of Vancouver¹. People have come to expect smoking bans in workplaces, indoor public places and many outdoor public places like beaches, parks and stadiums. They expect no less in their own homes.
- **Second hand smoke is a BIG problem in multi-unit housing – a top complaint. People want clean air.** The Condo Homeowners' Association cites second-hand smoke as a top 3 complaint. The BC Lung Association and Heart and Stroke Foundation also confirm an increasing number of weekly second-hand smoke complaints. Complaints escalate during summer when more people are smoking on their balconies, windows are open, etc. Without an enforceable, no-smoking bylaw, resolving smoke problems is very difficult and eats up valuable condo management time.
- **Most condo and apartment residents would prefer 100 percent smoke-free housing, BUT options are scarce.** A 2013 Angus Reid survey of residents living in BC condos and apartments found that one-half had experienced second-hand smoke entering their homes from neighbouring units. The same survey confirmed the majority (63%) would prefer to live in a 100 percent smoke-free building, but few exist.

- **100 percent smoke-free policies are PERFECTLY LEGAL. Advocates don't understand why more buildings aren't leveraging "smoke-free" as a marketing advantage.**
A smoke-free building is desirable, lessens headaches for property managers, reduces risk of fire and reduces clean-up costs. And, as our recent study of BC Real Estate Agents confirms, smoke-free buildings make suites easier to market and sell when the time comes.
- **ONLY going 100 percent smoke-free will solve second hand smoke problems.**
Even if smoking is restricted solely to inside a person's apartment, the smoke easily travels through ventilation systems, electrical outlets, under doors and through open windows into the surrounding units. No ventilation system, air purifier or other measure can solve the problem.

Why it pays to go smoke-free in Multi-Unit Dwellings!

LEGAL

- Enacting a no-smoking policy or bylaw in privately owned apartments and condominiums or public housing is legal.
- You can make your entire property smoke-free, including all indoor individual units and outdoor spaces like balconies, patios and the entire property.
- For rentals, it's easiest to go smoke-free with a new building. With existing buildings, by law landlords must exempt existing tenants. This means a no-smoking policy only applies to new tenants signing tenancy agreements and renewals of fixed term tenancies. (Note: *The Residential Tenancy Act* does not permit a landlord to change any terms in a tenancy agreement without the tenant's agreement. This includes fixed term tenancy agreements that are renewed on expiry.)
- For new strata developments, creating a non-smoking bylaw prior to any strata lots being sold is easy to do and makes good business sense.
- For existing condo complexes, strata members can vote to adopt a no-smoking bylaw that affects all existing and future residents. Current residents are not exempt from the new bylaw regulating behaviour because it came into effect after the purchase, as that would create two different classes of persons.

POPULAR

British Columbian residents want smoke-free housingⁱⁱ:

- British Columbians are used to smoke-free workplaces, restaurants, bars and public places and expect the same clean indoor air in their own homes.
- 62% prefer to live in a building where smoking is not permitted anywhere.
- 71% support more condos having no-smoking bylaws applying to all units and balconies.
- 67% would support a decision to prohibit smoking in their building.

Residents in apartments and condos want to know the smoking status of homesⁱⁱⁱ including:

- 89% - In which units is smoking permitted
- 96% - Is smoking permitted inside units and on balconies
- 87% - Was a previous resident a smoker, and
- 84 % Were there were past complaints about second-hand smoke

Only a very small proportion of BC residents living in MUDs allow smoking in their home^{iv}:

- 13.2% of all respondents are smokers (every day or occasional).
- More than twice as many renters than owners smoke: 19% compared to 8% respectively.
- 32% of MUDs residents, who smoke, do so in their home.
- 25% of all MUDs residents surveyed allow smoking in their residence or property by visitors.
- Only 6% of MUDs residents surveyed (or 50 out of 833) allow smoking in a room inside the home. Others who allow smoking restrict it to outside on a patio or outside the property.

Healthy

- 50% of residents in apartments and condos have experienced smoke infiltrating their homes from neighbouring units.^v
- There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Even brief exposure can be dangerous.^{vi}
- Second-hand smoke cannot be contained. Air leaks in ceilings, floors, and walls allow for smoke transfer between units. Separating smokers from non-smokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Second-hand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals. More than 50 of those chemicals are known to cause cancer.^{vii}
- When you are exposed to a person who is smoking – you inhale the same dangerous chemicals as the smoker.^{viii} Living with a smoker gives you a 20-30% higher chance of getting lung cancer.
- Second-hand smoke causes heart disease, cancer and respiratory problems in adults who do not smoke.^{ix}
- Breathing second-hand smoke is a known cause of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and children are more likely to have lung problems, ear infections and severe asthma from being around smoke^x.

Cost Effective

- Reduces cleaning, repair and maintenance costs. On average it costs 3-4 times more to clean a unit that has been smoked in compared to one that hasn't.
- Reduces risk of fire. Tobacco materials are the #1 source of fatal residential fires^{xi}.
- Reduces staff time dealing with resident conflicts about second-hand smoke.
Protects against litigation and human rights complaints by residents seeking accommodation

ⁱ Statistics Canada, Cumulative Profile, 2011 Census. Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

ⁱⁱ Angus Reid survey of 833 residents of Multi-Unit Dwellings in BC (371 renters and 461 owners) April 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Angus Reid Survey, 2013

^{iv} Angus Reid Survey, 2013

^v Angus Reid Survey, 2013

^{vi} [The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General](#), 2006

^{vii} National Toxicology Program. *9th Report on Carcinogens*, 2000. Research Triangle Park, NC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Sciences, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, 2000. <http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/ntp/roc/twelfth/profiles/tobacco-related-exposures.pdf>

^{viii} US Surgeon General's Report 2006

^{ix} US Surgeon General's Report 2006

^x US Surgeon General's Report 2006

^{xi} <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners/reports/docs/stats-fire-deaths.pdf>