



## EXPANDING SMOKE-FREE AREAS IN CITY OF TORONTO PARKS

**PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
CITY OF TORONTO**

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Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of the proposal by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Medical Officer of Health, that City Council prohibit smoking in and around City of Toronto park and recreation properties.

The Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco has been working to help create more indoor and outdoor smoke-free spaces since the early 1990s, beginning with our support of the provincial Tobacco Control Act in 1994. After years of work on municipal indoor smoke-free workplace and public place bylaws, we have increasingly turned our attention to the accelerating trend toward outdoor smoke-free spaces in municipalities across Ontario.

In 2009-10, I was a member of the provincial Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group, which made recommendations to the province on outdoor smoke-free spaces among other issues, in October 2010. I am also a member of the Region of Peel Smoke-free Bylaw Committee, whose work led to the passage and implementation of a region-wide smoke-free outdoor bylaw earlier this year. I would like to share a few observations about the process of making outdoor areas smoke-free, based on these experiences:

- The first issue that is sometimes raised when smoke-free outdoor bylaws are suggested is that exposure to second-hand smoke outdoors cannot be that harmful. The report before you references research that shows that proximity to multiple smokers outdoors can increase the risk of negative health effects from exposure. Toxic particles from tobacco smoke outdoors have been measured in concentrations that can cause risk to health as far as 8 metres away from groups of multiple smokers. These kinds of exposures can occur in many of the settings addressed by the proposed bylaw amendments.

The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke whatsoever. Exposure to tobacco smoke outdoors can, among other things, trigger asthma attacks in sensitive individuals, and depending on length of exposure, can affect the functioning of the coronary artery system.

- It is also important to address the positive modeling of smoking behaviour at outdoor venues where young people are active. The report before you says it best: "Research has shown that youth who view their peers or adults smoking in public places are more likely to view smoking as a normal, socially-acceptable behaviour. Youth who have a positive social image of smoking tend to be more likely to experiment with tobacco use. Coaches, parents and others involved in recreational activities often serve as youth role models."

### Founding Agencies

Canadian Cancer Society  
Ontario Division

Heart and Stroke  
Foundation of Ontario

Non-Smokers'  
Rights Association

Ontario Medical Association

### Supporting Agencies

Association of Local  
Public Health Agencies

Cancer Care Ontario

Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

Ontario Association of  
Naturopathic Doctors

Ontario Federation of Home  
and School Associations

Ontario Physical and Health  
Education Association

Ontario Public Health  
Association

Physicians for a  
Smoke-Free Canada

Registered Nurses  
Association of Ontario

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of Family Physicians

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- The effect of visible, attractive, available and widely-used tobacco products on young people cannot be underestimated, especially since our educational system does not address the need to avoid the use of tobacco products in a comprehensive manner. It is our experience that young people are not equipped to understand the nature and consequences of nicotine addiction, nor do they believe that tobacco-induced diseases – which usually strike longer-term older smokers – are any risk to them.

The proposal before you will, if enacted, reinforce the message in City of Toronto outdoor recreational settings that use of or exposure to tobacco products is not acceptable, and is dangerous.

- Part of sending this message involves the prohibition of smoking within 9 metres of the boundaries of many recreational areas. This is consistent with the 9 metre exclusion zone around the entrances to health care facilities established by the 1994 Tobacco Control Act, and is also consistent with research findings that concentrations of toxic smoke particles can pose risks to health up to about 8 metres from multiple smokers.
- The issues of enforcement and signage have received a great deal of attention at the Region of Peel's Smoke-free Outdoor Bylaw Committee. It has been our experience that if smoke-free bylaws are introduced with appropriate public education, supported by clear and visible signage, public acceptance is generally high and the need for enforcement reduces quickly over time. This acceptance is reflected in a variety of polls, both municipal and provincial, that show public support for smoking restrictions outdoors in Ontario already ranging between 77% and 89%, as referred to in your report.

In closing, by enacting the proposed restrictions, the City of Toronto will catch up with about 40 other Ontario municipalities that have already implemented a variety of smoke-free outdoor restrictions, so far without difficulty.

We want to again compliment this Committee and the City government for this important step forward in protecting the health of Toronto's youth.