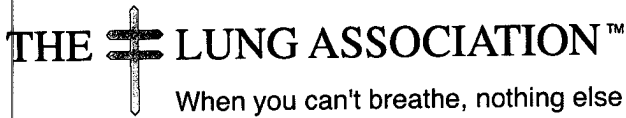


# HL24.3.18



When you can't breathe, nothing else matters.

September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Good Afternoon members of the Board of Health Committee,

My name is Alexandra Jackson and I am a volunteer with the Ontario Lung Association. I am here today to add the Ontario Lung Association's voice to the many others who are endorsing Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David McKeown's proposal.

Every day 15 per cent of Torontonians are exposed to serious health risks simply because they walk past a building entranceway, spend time at a swimming beach or enjoy a meal on a restaurant patio. Toronto must join the growing number of jurisdictions across Canada and around the world that are banning smoking in public outdoor spaces to protect their citizens from the dangers of second-hand smoke. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke – even outdoors.

An outdoor smoking by-law will not only benefit the hundreds of thousands of Torontonians who currently live with lung disease, such as asthma - like myself, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer, it will help to ensure that public spaces remain healthy and accessible to everyone.

An outdoor by-law also brings other very important benefits. It reduces negative role-modelling for young people. Seeing people smoke in public spaces makes smoking appear socially acceptable and this has a strong influence on children and young people. An outdoor by-law also increases the motivation for people who smoke to quit or cut back and reduces exposure to triggers that may cause a relapse for those who have recently stopped smoking.

On a personal note, my 42-year-old father smoked for 30 years until just over a month ago, when he suffered two mini-strokes a week apart. After his second stroke, he decided he was done with smoking. I am proud to say he is now one month smoke-free! An outdoor smoking by-law would have a significant impact on the life of my father because he would be able to enter or exit a building, go to sports fields and swimming beaches, enjoy events at public squares and share a meal on a restaurant or bar patio with his family, without being exposed to smoking and running the risk of relapsing. Quitting smoking is a very difficult process and it took my father 30 years to finally win his battle with nicotine addiction. He is a positive role model and an outdoor smoking by-law would support him and others in their efforts to live smoke-free.

While the Ontario Lung Association supports the proposed new by-law, we note with concern that some challenges will remain, such as the jurisdictional issue that threatens to severely impair the effectiveness of the city's ban on smoking in building entranceways. It is to be hoped that these challenges can be addressed through further investigation and consultation so that Torontonians can breathe freely, cleanly and safely as they walk the streets of their city. Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable illness and death in Ontario, killing more than 13,000 Ontarians every year. Together we can improve the health of our communities by promoting smoke-free lifestyles and by protecting people from second-hand smoke. As a leader in lung health and tobacco control, the Ontario Lung Association strongly endorses this proposal for a by-law to create smoke-free outdoor spaces in Toronto.

Because, if you can't breathe, nothing else matters...



Sincerely,

Alexandra Jackson  
Ontario Lung Association Volunteer

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