

Clearing the air in your apartment

Working to make multi-unit housing smoke free

If you have ever smelled tobacco smoke in an apartment or condo hallway, you can imagine what life is like for the non-smokers who live there.

In apartments in houses, townhouse units or co-ops, drifting second-hand smoke can enter living space through shared walls, cracks in floors and ceilings, hallways, ventilation systems and from balconies, doors and windows.

We know that exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of cancers, lung disease and many childhood illnesses. To reduce those risks, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act prohibits smoking in all indoor public and work spaces. In multi-unit dwellings this law covers hallways, laundry and common rooms. It doesn't cover the private living space behind closed doors.

The no-smoking lease

It's up to the landlords or owners to make their building smoke free. It's legal and enforceable. The only stipulation is that any new smoking restrictions cannot be imposed on existing tenants living in the units. It can be added to a lease once the unit becomes vacant.

Local managers, including the Barrie Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation and many small building owners, have begun to include no-smoking clauses in new leases, making the buildings 100 per cent smoke free over time.

It's a win-win for everyone. It works to protect the health of tenants while protecting landlords' investments in their property. Some of the benefits for landlords include:

- ◆ **Lower repair and refurbishing costs** – Cleaning a smoker's unit can be two to three times more expensive than a smoke-free unit.
- ◆ **Reduced risk of fire** – Smoking materials and open flame (cigarettes, lighters and matches) are the number one cause of fatal residential fires. Landlords who have smoke-free policies not only reduce the risk of fire but may also be eligible for reduced insurance premiums.
- ◆ **Attractive to renters** – More than 70 per cent of Simcoe Muskoka adults 20 and over do not smoke. A smoke-free unit or building makes business sense.



Getting started

Both tenants and landlords can take steps to clear the air in their units and buildings. Here are a few tips to get started.

Tenants

- ◆ When renting or buying, specify you want to be in a smoke-free building.
- ◆ If you are being exposed to drifting secondhand smoke, suggest solutions to your landlord. Statistics show that more smokers are making their homes smoke free to protect their families.
- ◆ Check out our website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org for links to resources to support your quest for smoke-free housing.

Landlords/Condo Owners

- ◆ **Learn your rights** – You can include a no-smoking clause in leases or sales agreements, designate a building as smoke free, and move to become 100 per cent smoke free through attrition.
- ◆ **Advertise your smoke-free units to attract renters** – When selling ensure the real estate ad specifies a condo is smoke free or in a smoke-free building.
- ◆ **Check out** www.smokefreehousingontario.ca for samples of leases, experiences elsewhere and other supports you can use to help make your property smoke free.



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