

September 22, 2012

Mayor Joe Fontana and Members of the Community Service Committee

Re: Smoking Restrictions in Municipal Outdoor Spaces

Your Worship and Committee Members,

My name is Reem Gray, a third year BScN Nursing student at the University of Western Ontario and I would like to state my support for banning smoking in Municipal Parks and within 30-feet of a municipally owned building.

Second-hand smoke is a health hazard. Implementing smoking restrictions will protect the health of this community. Second-hand smoke can cause cancer, heart disease, and respiratory issues. Research shows there is no safe level of second-hand smoke. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation (2012), smoking contributes to more than 37,000 deaths a year in Canada and almost 6,300 non-smokers die each year from exposure to second-hand smoke. If current rates of tobacco use continue, approximately 1 million Canadians will die over the next 20 years as a direct result of smoking and second-hand smoke.

This has major societal impacts. Tobacco-related diseases cost the Ontario economy approximately \$1.6 billion in healthcare annually, result in more than \$4.4 billion in productivity losses and account for at least 500,000 hospital days each year (Ministry of Health Promotion, 2006).

Limiting exposure to second-hand smoke is very important. It is especially critical in terms of municipal parks, playgrounds, sports and playing fields, stadiums, beaches, splash pads and outdoor community meeting areas.

Children, in particular, are vulnerable to second-hand smoke and face health consequences such as asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and so on. Exposing them to environmental tobacco is not only a health hazard but promotes the wrong message. A smoking ban would provide healthy role modeling for children and teens. It creates a culture where not smoking is the norm, it is the easy, the healthy and the better choice.

This would also greatly impact teens and adults in a positive manner. As an adult non-smoker, I find it very frustrating not to be able to walk by a building or through a park without inhaling the ominous cloud of toxins in the air courtesy of those who smoke. I have no control over the environment that I am in and it is difficult to avoid. Implementing this ban or in the very least having designated smoking areas would secure the rights of members in this community to breathe freely.

Smoke-free environments will protect the community from the impacts of second-hand smoke, help prevent youth from smoking and encourage smokers to quit. I urge you to strongly consider this smoking ban and implementing other smoking restrictions for better health in our community.

Sincerely,

Reem Gray