

BC health advocates want multi-unit housing providers to wake up and smell the smoke. Going smoke-free is good for healthy living and a healthy bottom line!

While provincial and municipal laws protect us from second-hand smoke where we work, eat and socialize, many people are still exposed to unwanted second-hand smoke where they live.



January 20, 2014 - The US Surgeon General's landmark report, which celebrated its 50th birthday this week, was first to acknowledge that smoking kills.

Since 1964, health advocates the world over - including the Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation - have worked tirelessly to prevent people from smoking, help smokers quit, and protect the public from the harms of tobacco smoke in public places.

Uncharted tobacco territory however remains - namely in our homes and specifically smoking in multi-unit housing.

Approximately two million British Columbians live in apartment buildings, condominiums, townhomes and duplexes – the fastest growing segment of the BC housing

market. And while the BC Tobacco Control Act designates common areas in multi-unit housing (areas such as lobbies, corridors and laundries) as public smoke-free spaces, the laws do not apply to private areas such as balconies nor do they address the issue of drifting smoke.

“Almost nine in 10 British Columbians are non-smokers, and the vast majority would prefer to live in an entirely smoke-free environment, but smoke-free housing options are slim,” says Scott McDonald, CEO of the BC Lung Association. “The BC government is not ready to engage on the issue, so we’re focusing our efforts on the BC housing industry. It’s a mystery to us why more landlords aren’t taking advantage of demand for smoke-free housing.”

According to a 2013 Angus Reid survey of 833 BC apartment renters and condo owners:

Half reported exposure to second-hand smoke

- 2 in 3 would prefer to live in a smoke-free environment
- 2 in 3 report strong support for more condos having smoke-free bylaws
- 6 in 10 see second-hand smoke as a health hazard; half see it as a nuisance

“Most people unfortunately suffer in silence, not wanting to cause a confrontation,” says said Diego Marchese, CEO BC & Yukon of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. “Many of us spend eight hours a day in workplaces legally required to be smoke-free. Then we go home to apartments where we spend 16 hours or so a day, where there are no rules protecting us from exposure to toxic tobacco smoke.”

“Our first step is educating people that it is legally within a building manager’s or owners’ rights to designate specific apartment units or entire buildings as smoke-free. It is also within the rights of strata owners to approve a bylaw making a building entirely smoke-free,” adds Marchese.

Squamish-based strata management company owner Mike Young of Dynamic Property Management says drifting second-hand smoke is a common complaint, “Even when smoking is restricted to the inside a condo, smoke can easily travel through the ventilation system, electrical outlets, under doors and through open windows into the surrounding units. The buildings we manage constantly get complaints. Drifting secondhand smoke is one of the biggest complaints in multi-family complexes. But once a complex implements a 100 percent no smoking policy, the problem is solved.”

www.smokefreehousingbc.ca

To support those interested in helping increase options for smoke-free housing in BC, the Heart and Stroke Foundation (B.C. & Yukon) established a website providing comprehensive information for landlords, strata councils and tenants. Learn more about how to draft, implement and enforce a smoke-free building policy [here](#).

The [BC Lung Association](#) and the [Heart and Stroke Foundations \(B.C. & Yukon\)](#) work together to raise public awareness about the serious health risks of exposure to second-hand smoke and to advocate for smoke-free environments for all workers and the public.

Katrina van Bylandt | Manager, Communications | BC Lung Association

T 604.731.5864 **TF** 1.800.665.5864 **C** 778.772.4788 **Skype** gravinkvb