
West End heritage condo building outgrows its smoking past

“When the 1928 building was first established, people no doubt smoked freely, inside and out for decades. Today it’s a whole different story. Owners are no longer as tolerant of second-hand smoke,” said Andrea Sharkey, Strata Manager for FirstService Residential Property Management.

Sharkey is speaking about the Queen Charlotte, a strata-titled heritage building in Vancouver’s West End, and the strata owners’ choice to go 100 percent smoke-free.

“Council was getting complaints about second-hand smoke, and efforts to deal with the problem short of banning smoking altogether were unsuccessful, because the smoke travelled through the building’s heating and ventilation system, and even drifted out the windows of the suite in question and into the units above.”

After efforts to confine the smoke to the smoker’s unit proved ineffective, a year ago the building’s Strata Council held a Special General Meeting to vote on whether to ban smoking altogether – on the building grounds, all common areas, and inside owners’ and the rental suite. The 100% no smoking bylaw required a 3/4 vote and passed easily. Today the Queen Charlotte has been officially smoke-free for over a year.

Sharkey confirms that even one smoker living in the complex can have a huge impact on the health and well-being of many other residents in the building. The decision to go smoke-free was primarily an issue of health and safety for all residents, but was also an economic issue, as dealing with resident complaints was taking up a lot of management’s time and resources.

Health advocates including the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation are keen to move the issue forward and help increase the availability of smoke-free housing options in apartments and condos.

“We regularly receive calls from property managers and residents looking for help to address second-hand smoke,” says Sharon Hammond, Manager of www.smokefreehousingbc.ca a valuable resource for Strata Corporations exploring the idea of going smoke-free.

“Not everyone knows it’s legal to adopt a 100% no smoking bylaw. We want to promote smoke-free building success stories, like the Queen Charlotte’s, to educate strata corporations on the growing number of buildings becoming 100% smoke-free.

Plus, we want to get the word out that while smoke-free buildings protect residents from a known health hazard, they can also increase marketability, reduce conflicts among residents, protect against litigation and human rights complaints, save money on maintenance and eliminate a leading cause of residential fires.”

“It’s win-win. What’s good for resident health is also good for the bottom line.”

For easy-to-use info on how to implement a no-smoking bylaw visit:

www.smokefreehousingbc.ca.

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