

Promoting smoke-free multi-unit dwellings in the Peterborough County-City Region

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1 INTRODUCTION

Exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS) can lead to a variety of negative health outcomes ranging from nasal irritation to coronary heart disease and cancers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), 2006). SHS, that is the smoke that comes off the lit end of a cigarette and the smoke exhaled by individuals, contains over 7,000 chemicals at least 69 of which are known carcinogens (USDHHS, 2010).

In response to this knowledge, many public places have been designated as smoke-free to reduce exposure to SHS and therefore improve health outcomes. As of 2012, 28 countries have laws that require non-hospitality workplaces and hospitality venues to be smoke-free (Hyland, Barnoya & Coral, 2012). In Canada, all provinces and territories have legislation in place to create smoke-free environments. The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* (SFOA) is Ontario's legislation which prohibits smoking in restaurants and bars, indoor workplaces, common areas of multi-unit dwellings, school grounds, home daycares, and within 9 metres of entranceways to hospitals, health care and psychiatric facilities. As of 2009, smoking is also prohibited in vehicles when children under 16 years of age are present (Government of Ontario, 2010).

As smoke-free spaces have become the norm, the home has emerged as the most common site of exposure to SHS. In 2010, over 1.3 million non-smoking Canadians reported being regularly exposed to SHS in their home (Statistics Canada, 2011). To prevent exposure individual families can elect to make their own home smoke-free. A smoke-free policy in the home will not only protect individuals from exposure to SHS, but also increases the likelihood that individuals who smoke will reduce their consumption of cigarettes, make quit attempts and remain smoke-free (Mills, Messer, Gilpin & Pierce, 2009).

While individuals living in multi-unit dwellings (MUDs), residential units that share a wall, ceiling or floor with another residential unit, can make their own units smoke-free, they may still be involuntarily exposed to SHS in their home if others within the building or complex smoke indoors or close to windows, air intakes or doors. When individuals smoke in MUDs, SHS can transfer between units exposing those in non-smoking units to SHS (Kraev, Adamkiewicz, Hammond & Spengler, 2009). Tenants and landlords may attempt to seal existing units to prevent SHS from entering, however research has shown that while this may reduce SHS exposure, it will not eliminate the problem (Bohac, Hewett, Hammond & Grimsrud, 2011). To prevent exposure to SHS in MUDs, smoke-free policies can be implemented. Under the SFOA, smoking is prohibited in all common areas of MUDs, including hallways, stairwells, elevators, laundry rooms, party rooms, and parking garages (Government of Ontario, 2010). The SFOA does not however address smoking within private areas such as individual units and balconies, and does not apply to the outdoor grounds of the building.

The need to move beyond the SFOA to protect residents of MUDs from exposure to SHS has been identified by many in Canada and internationally. In Canada, the Non-Smokers' Rights Association (NSRA) is taking a lead role in advocating for the development of smoke-free MUDs, and has produced a variety of resources to support work in this area (for more information, please see: <http://www.nsra-adnf.ca/cms/page1433.cfm>). Currently most policy work is occurring at the individual building, landlord

or housing provider level rather than at a government level (Reid & Hammond, 2012). The Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU) identified smoke-free MUDs as a priority area of focus for their region. Consistent with the majority of work in this area, their focus is on encouraging local landlords and housing providers to develop policies for their buildings and complexes. They work with housing providers of all sizes from duplexes to larger housing providers as they acknowledge that all cases advance the cause. This report highlights the strategies used by PCCHU staff to support the development of smoke-free housing options in the Peterborough region.

2 METHODS

For this report, knowledge related to PCCHU staff member's efforts to support the development and implementation of smoke-free MUDs policies was collected. Multiple sources of evidence were gathered including key informant interviews, and the collection of documents, archival records and physical artefacts. Data was analyzed using a general inductive method.

3 IDENTIFICATION OF SMOKE-FREE MUDs AS AN AREA OF INTEREST

"I never received complaints in the 1990s from MUDs, but as we removed [SHS] from more and more sectors, these complaints grew."

Tobacco Enforcement Officer, PCCHU

In Peterborough, smoking in MUDs is a growing area of concern. PCCHU's Tobacco Enforcement Officer (TEO) has been working in the community since 1994 as the region's only TEO. TEOs are designated as Provincial Offences Officers by the Province of Ontario and thus have the authority to enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA). This means they work to ensure that workplaces, public places, and the public are compliant with the SFOA. This includes ensuring that No Smoking signs are posted where required in local businesses, schools and workplaces; inspecting tobacco vendors to ensure that they are complying with the laws regulating the sale of tobacco (e.g., not displaying tobacco products or promotional items); laying charges as necessary; and, responding to complaints from the public related to tobacco. While the role does not specifically include addressing tobacco-use in MUDs, beyond ensuring the common areas are smoke-free as per the SFOA, the daily reality of their role is that they field many complaints and questions from the public about second-hand smoke and tobacco-use more broadly. As a result, they may be called upon to address issues that go beyond the SFOA. Due to the increased awareness surrounding smoke-free places, the number of inquiries that the TEO at the PCCHU receives related to smoking in MUDs is significant. As the TEO has been working with the community for many years, and is the only TEO in the Peterborough County-City Region, she is well placed to deal with these types of issues.

When the TEO first received complaints related to smoking in MUDs, it was felt that beyond ensuring common-areas were smoke-free as per the SFOA there was little that could be done to help protect individuals living in MUDs from exposure to SHS. Over time other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States began addressing tobacco-use in MUDs through policy change, education campaigns and other initiatives, and it became apparent to PCCHU staff that there were opportunities for landlords and housing providers to act, and evidence to suggest there could be success in the area of smoke-free MUDs.

To date, no funding has been available to specifically address the promotion of smoke-free housing policies in the PCCHU region. The TEO and a Health Promoter from the Tobacco Use Prevention Division of PCCHU focus on smoke-free MUDs when they are able to do so as part of their daily work. PCCHU staff have focused their efforts related to promoting smoke-free housing in the PCCHU region to two main areas of work: supporting landlords and tenants making applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board related to SHS, and encouraging and supporting local housing providers to develop and implement smoke-free policies for their properties.

4 LANDLORD AND TENANT BOARD CASES

PCCHU staff have provided support to landlords and tenants submitting applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board (The Board) related to tobacco-use within their MUDs. The Board administers the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* which sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants living in residential properties in Ontario. They provide information about the Act to interested parties, and resolve disputes between landlords and tenants.

PCCHU's TEO views Board cases as opportunities to assist local tenants and landlords with issues related to tobacco-use in MUDs, with the potential to also build broader support and momentum for the smoke-free MUDs movement in the region. When approached by a landlord or tenant for support with an application to the Board, PCCHU staff first determines what issue the individual intends to address in their application. If the application includes other issues beyond the concerns related to tobacco, PCCHU staff provide telephone support and direct individuals to additional online supports, rather than providing more intensive one-on-one support. This decision has been made as staff feel that it is important to show that issues related to tobacco-use and SHS exposure are severe enough to stand on their own. As the TEO said, "*second hand smoke is a critical issue that should not be compromised by other issues*".

Support provided by the PCCHU to landlords and tenants who are making applications to the Board regarding SHS exposure includes writing letters of support and helping them prepare for their appearance in front of the Board. PCCHU staff have supported six successful applications to the Board related to tobacco-use in MUDs. As the Board adjudicators are not bound by precedent, each case is unique and can result in a different decision.

The media has reported on successful Board cases, and PCCHU can issue press releases to ensure the media is made aware of these successes. This media attention ensures the community is aware of the decisions being made and the push for smoke-free housing. The TEO explained that when speaking with landlords and tenants who want support for an application to the Board, she tells them that "*the reason we offer this support is the belief that these first successes are invaluable. We share this information with Canada's tobacco control network which only serves to encourage others to follow suit*".

5 SMOKE-FREE HOUSING POLICIES

The majority of the PCCHU's work to promote smoke-free MUDs has focused on encouraging landlords and housing corporations to develop and implement smoke-free housing policies for their properties. To date 15 policies have been developed in the region.

5.1 BUILDING THE MOMENTUM FOR SMOKE-FREE HOUSING

As a first step to promoting smoke-free housing policies in the region, PCCHU staff wanted to demonstrate to the broader housing community that there was interest in smoke-free housing, and that smoke-free policies were possible. To do so they supported three separate housing providers' efforts to develop and implement smoke-free policies.

The initial housing provider that the PCCHU staff worked with ran a seniors' residence. The TEO had received a complaint related to SHS from a tenant and met with the Director of the residence to inform them of the complaint. They used this opportunity to provide background information on tobacco-free policies, and the role housing providers could play in protecting their residents from exposure to SHS. The Director was interested in this work, and agreed to consider implementing such a policy. The TEO was asked to attend a Board of Directors meeting to assist the Director in sharing the information about SHS in MUDs and policy options. It was acknowledged that while the Director saw the value in such a policy, they did not know the issue as well as the TEO, and thus the TEO was well positioned to share this information at the meeting. Following the meeting the Board of Directors agreed to implement a policy, making them the first housing provider in the region to go smoke-free.

A conversation between the TEO and a contact at another housing provider in the seniors' housing sector about SHS in MUDs led to a chain reaction that culminated in the implementation of a tobacco-free policy in that residence. The same individual also sat on the Board of Directors of a third housing provider and following their own success with the policy, they took the idea to the third provider which also went smoke-free.

Senior residences were identified by the TEO as receptive settings for policy development because of their typically lower smoking rates. Moreover, PCCHU staff had relationships with housing providers in this sector which facilitated the policy implementation process. PCCHU staff's role in the development of these policies varied based on the needs of the housing provider. Some tasks they completed included attending meetings with the Directors and Board of Directors to pitch the idea of smoke-free housing, providing examples of how to word smoke-free policies in leases, and assisting with the promotion of the policy more broadly. Once all three housing providers had implemented a smoke-free policy, the PCCHU released a press release celebrating this work to encourage others to follow the same example.

Although PCCHU staff were aware of examples of smoke-free policies from other jurisdictions, both provincially and nationally, that they could highlight to demonstrate momentum at a higher level, they felt strongly that local examples were needed. Experience has proven that local examples receive the most attention, and are what lead to the greatest change.

Key success factor: Importance of local examples

“People here in Peterborough don’t want to hear what’s going on elsewhere. They really don’t care about Waterloo, that Vancouver is doing all sorts of exciting things...they want to hear local stories”

Tobacco Enforcement Officer, PCCHU

PCCHU staff found it was critical to highlight local-level examples when building the momentum for smoke-free MUDs in the region. As a result, during discussions with housing providers and presentations, PCCHU staff highlight local successes such as the story of the first three smoke-free properties in the region. These local examples not only show that this type of work is possible within the local context, but also provides housing providers with information on whom else they could speak with regarding this issue outside of those from public health. The NSRA runs the Smoke-Free Housing Ontario website (www.smokefreehousingon.ca) which includes success stories of housing providers who have implemented smoke-free policies as well as many other resources for housing providers, tenants and public health practitioners. A local Peterborough example is highlighted on this site, and thus PCCHU staff also refer individuals to this resource.

5.2 MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH THE HOUSING SECTOR

Once PCCHU staff had supported three housing providers to develop smoke-free properties, they turned their attention to broadening the movement to other housing providers. Their intention was to reach as many housing providers as possible, to ensure that they could create momentum in the region that would demonstrate that smoke-free housing was a priority for the community. PCCHU staff made contact with individual housing providers, housing and landlord organizations and with landlords where tenants had made complaints about tobacco-use. Initially their focus was on social housing properties as it was acknowledged that the individuals living in these housing complexes are vulnerable as they may not be able to move to another housing location as easily as others when dealing with issues related to second-hand smoke.

These staff had not worked with the housing community in the past. Thus, they found it was critically important to take time to learn who was involved with the community and how they interacted. To do so they spoke with others at PCCHU who either had worked with the housing community in the past, or were directly involved in the community themselves through positions on Boards of Directors or other means. They also spoke to individuals from local housing associations to learn more about their membership.

Lesson Learned: Importance of getting to know the housing community/making connections

“When you’re working outside of your regular comfort zone, your circle of colleagues, it can be a really new adventure. Having connections really helps because it’s like a puzzle. The housing people know each other, so word [of this work] gets around.”

Health Promoter, PCCHU

When starting to work on the issue of smoke-free MUDs, PCCHU staff found it was critically important to take time to understand the housing community, and to find shared connections. When working in a new area, understanding what the field looks like, who the key players are and how they work together is critically important. PCCHU staff consulted with their connections and colleagues who had knowledge of the housing community to learn more, and to gain access to the key contacts they would need in the field. This allowed them to make connections with individuals that they may not have otherwise.

5.3 MAKING THE CASE FOR SMOKE-FREE HOUSING POLICIES

Once PCCHU had learned more about the housing community, they began contacting housing providers to discuss the issue of smoke-free housing. Contacts were made with housing providers who had connected with the health unit to discuss an issue they were facing with tobacco-use or where tenants had complained to the health unit about exposure to SHS within their units. Initial contact was often made by e-mail or telephone. Following this, PCCHU staff met in person to introduce the idea of implementing smoke-free policies. During this meeting, PCCHU staff typically encouraged the “gold standard” policy – a policy that leads to a 100% smoke-free building/complex. While not all providers moved forward with the “gold standard” they felt that it was an important place to start, as you can always show them alternative ways to implement the policy. As the TEO said, *“whenever I have meetings with people...it’s always going in with the best case scenario and then cutting away. It’s always, do something, start anywhere...at the same time, we have to remember [SHS] is a carcinogen, we’re not just talking about something that isn’t nice, this is serious”*.

PCCHU staff meet with housing providers on an individual basis, and have also been invited to make larger presentations to housing groups and Boards of Directors. A presentation developed by the NSRA to promote smoke-free housing was adapted to ensure it fit the local context, and was used to make larger presentations to housing groups. An example of a presentation that PCCHU gave to a housing provider is included in Appendix A, and the NSRA presentation can be found at:

http://www.smokefreehousingon.ca/cms/file/generic_MUDs_ppt_for_landlords.pdf. During the in-person meetings and presentations, PCCHU staff focus on highlighting local examples and champions, addressing misconceptions and providing the business argument for implementing such a policy. Each of these issues they address are explored in more detail in the following sections.

5.3.1 Highlighting local examples and champions

PCCHU staff found that when first presenting the idea of smoke-free housing policies, many housing providers see the value of such a policy but have concerns about how it would work in practice. The ability to highlight local examples of how other housing providers in the Peterborough region have

implemented similar policies successfully has been found to be critically important to the success of these meetings. PCCHU staff used the examples of the first three housing providers who went smoke-free, and additional examples of how others have gone smoke-free since to highlight how this work can be accomplished.

In addition to sharing local success stories, PCCHU staff found that being able to refer landlords to their peers who have implemented policies has been extremely beneficial. When PCCHU staff work with a housing provider to implement a smoke-free policy they ask their permission to share their name and contact information with others who are interested in implementing similar policies. This allows housing providers considering such a policy to speak with others who know the business, and who understand the role of housing provider more than the public health staff may.

Key success factor: Importance of champions within the housing community

“I always ask permission from the homes I work with to use real names. There is a lot of government suspicion out there but when you say you know [name of a housing provider] invites any of you to call him at his number to talk about this, that’s not coming from government anymore, that’s coming from someone in the field. So that’s a really good strategy.”

Tobacco Enforcement Officer, PCCHU

Having champions within the housing community has been critical to the success of these initiatives. PCCHU staff encourage housing providers who have implemented tobacco-free policies in their properties to become champions for smoke-free housing by assisting others in the community who are implementing similar policies. One way they can serve as champions is by allowing PCCHU staff to share their contact information with others who may want more information on how to develop and implement a smoke-free policy, or who may have questions about the process. PCCHU staff identify the ability to share these champions’ information as being critical to the success of the work they do. While public health staff can speak with housing providers and share the reasons why they should consider a smoke-free policy, hearing the information from a peer working in the same industry with similar experiences can be more convincing.

5.3.2 Addressing misconceptions

When making presentations about smoke-free housing to local housing providers, and during one-on-one conversations, the PCCHU staff hear many misperceptions about smoke-free housing and about what implementing a smoke-free policy means. Housing providers may have concerns that these types of policies are not legal, that they are not enforceable or that they are not fair to those who do smoke, among others. PCCHU staff found that if they were open about these concerns, and addressed them directly in their presentation or discussion, this would help to create an open forum for discussion, rather than a discussion that was limited by the misconceptions held by others. Emphasizing that implementing a policy related to smoking in the units is not attacking individuals’ personal rights, but rather is protecting the health of their tenants has been critical. It is important to acknowledge that while individuals may have to change their behaviours (e.g., go outside to smoke rather than smoking in their unit) this type of policy is not intended to discriminate against any individuals, nor should it be seen as a

way to make tenants quit smoking. Rather, it is a way to protect the health of those living in the building. As the Health Promoter from PCCHU said, “Deal with these things up front in the presentation. Deal with the misperceptions. It’s about asking [those who smoke] to change their behaviour a little more. And that’s what people get caught in and until you address that that’s what they are thinking they aren’t hearing the other information. They think it’s about denying people housing.”

Lesson learned: Do not make smoke-free housing about cessation

“I say, I don’t want you to quit, that will be your decision when you decide to do it. I just don’t want you to expose other people to [SHS]....these same people – they don’t smoke in malls, at their kids’ schools, in cabs...they already adjust their behaviour. We’ve just left this one [MUDs] to the end because it’s probably the hardest. You should already be going outside anyways, it shouldn’t be us telling you to go outside...it isn’t about making people quit and that’s critical.”

Tobacco Enforcement Officer, PCCHU

When approaching housing providers about the issue of second-hand smoke in MUDs, the TEO and Health Promoter found that many assumed that while they were talking about policy change, what they were really wanting was for people to quit smoking. While as public health professionals they support all individuals’ attempts to quit smoking, this is not the focus of this work. Rather, the focus of this work is on protection – protecting residents from involuntary exposure to SHS. Throughout this process it has become clear to them that it is important to make it clear to stakeholders that the primary focus of this work is on policy changes and protection from SHS, not cessation.

5.3.3 Highlighting the business argument

When encouraging landlords to consider smoke-free policy development PCCHU staff have found that sharing the business case is crucial. Smoking in units is extremely costly to landlords. In one local housing complex, the cost of repairs to a unit after an individual who smoked had lived there for a period of time was in excess of \$8,000. This is a cost that could be avoided if a smoke-free policy was implemented.

5.4 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION

Once a housing provider decides to implement a smoke-free housing policy, PCCHU staff can work with them to support this process. This can include providing examples of language that could be used in leases to explain the policy, example policies, speaking with tenant groups, or other supports. PCCHU staff also takes this opportunity to promote the policy that has been developed to the broader community through press releases and other means (see Appendix B for example press releases). This is seen as a critical element of the process as it allows the momentum for smoke-free housing to continue to build in the community.

5.5 CHALLENGES

While PCCHU staff experienced many successes in the area of smoke-free housing policies, they have also faced challenges. A major challenge they have faced is finding tenants living in MUDs who are willing to take on the role of advocate. PCCHU staff identified the value of having tenants who are affected by SHS in MUDs work as advocates to promote the need for smoke-free housing policies

within their own housing complexes and within the community. While some tenants have been willing to take on this role, for example going to the media to share their story of how SHS affected their quality of life, most tenants are not willing to speak publically about this issue. PCCHU staff have attempted to develop tenant groups, however to date these efforts have not been successful. It is felt that there is concern among some tenants that if they were to become advocates for smoke-free housing they may face issues with their landlords and fellow tenants. PCCHU continues to make attempts to develop tenant groups, and identify tenants who would be willing to take on the role of champion. Tenants who do approach the PCCHU about issues related to SHS in their housing complex remain anonymous when PCCHU staff contact the landlord on their behalf.

Another challenge faced by PCCHU staff has been that not all housing providers are willing to implement smoke-free housing policies the first time that PCCHU staff approach them about the issue. Reasons for not addressing the issue could include not wanting to alienate those tenants who smoke, a sense that exposure to SHS is not a major concern for tenants, their own personal views and attitudes on smoking and smoking restrictions, or a sense that they have many other pressing issues to deal with and cannot take on another. When faced with a housing provider who is unable or unwilling to implement a smoke-free policy at the time, PCCHU staff have found that it's important to be persistent. PCCHU staff will continue to follow-up with that housing provider to see if there are any changes to their situation, and if they become willing or able to address the issue. They will also attempt to connect with others working for the housing provider to ensure they are also aware of the issue, and will continue to focus on raising awareness about the value of smoke-free housing policies and the dangers of second-hand smoke exposure within the housing community generally. As smoke-free policies become more prevalent in the region and in the province, as the community becomes more aware of the issue and as situations change for individual providers, these individuals may become more open to addressing the issue.

Lesson Learned: Being persistent with housing providers

"You have to be so innovative. If you get a no [to policy development], think about how do you get around this no, and there will be a way...don't take no for an answer. Develop a thick skin, don't park on health effects. Acknowledge it's a Class A carcinogen, no safe level of exposure, but it's not about making [tenants] quit...don't let one individual hold you back"

Tobacco Enforcement Officer, PCCHU

While PCCHU has successfully worked with many housing providers to implement smoke-free policies, they have also found that some housing providers are not interested in implementing a smoke-free policy. They have found that it is important to go back to those providers and continue to push the value of the policy because in some cases individuals will become more open to the policy as they hear more about it, or see similar policies implemented in the region. In some cases, speaking with another individual at the same housing provider can also prove to be useful.

6 NEXT STEPS

Now that PCCHU has begun to build the momentum for smoke-free housing in the Peterborough Region they plan to continue to work with landlords and tenants to put additional policies in place. PCCHU also plans to identify additional partners who could potentially play a role in this work. One such partner that they plan to approach is the local Fire Department as they could have a role to play promoting smoke-free housing as a fire prevention measure.

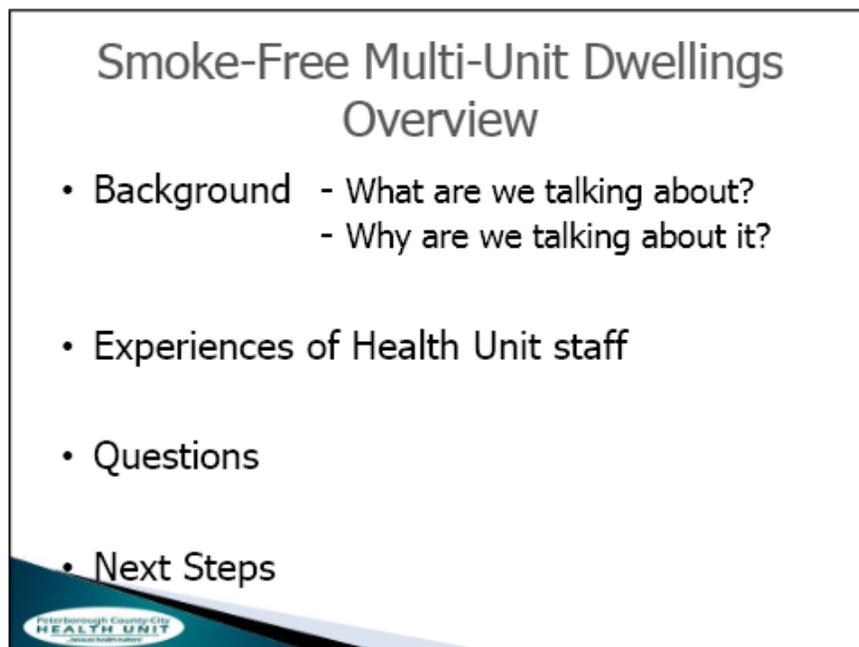
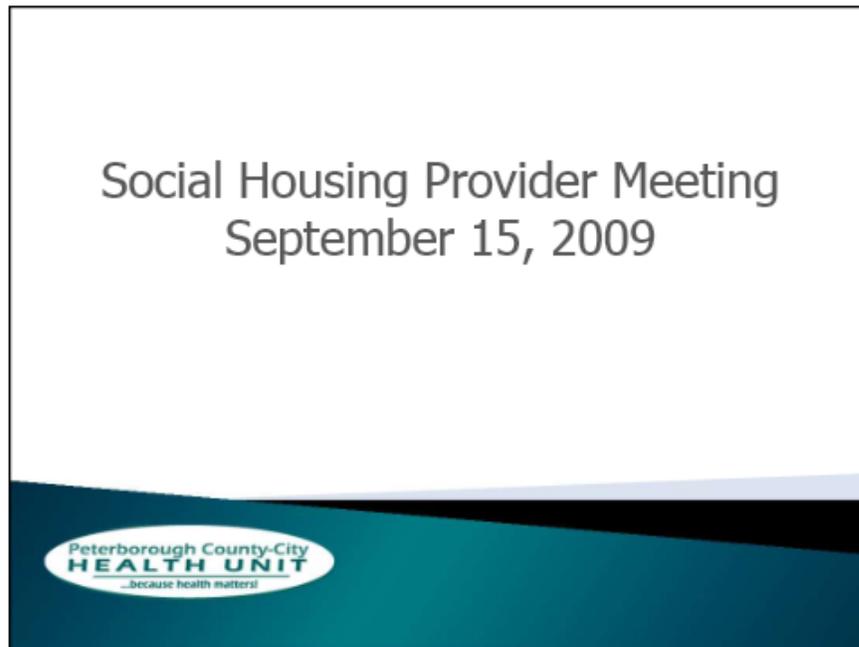
Just as having champions within the housing community is important, it is also critical to have champions for the work at the health unit. While all health units work within the Ontario Public Health Standards, each health unit identifies their own priorities for their day to day work and the way in which they will address the Standards. At the PCCHU, supporting landlords and tenants to implement smoke-free housing policies has been identified as a priority area of work. The PCCHU does not have any dedicated funding for the work they do to promote smoke-free MUDs. Rather, the Health Promoter and TEO complete this work when they have time available to do so. The success that has been accomplished by the PCCHU in the area of smoke-free MUDs is due, in no small part, to the importance that these individuals place on the work. Without champions for the work in the health unit the successes achieved to date may not have been accomplished.

Overall, PCCHU staff found that to be successful in this area you may not need a large, comprehensive strategy. What you do need are committed individuals who are willing to put in the time and effort needed to bring smoke-free MUDs policies to fruition. As the TEO from PCCHU said, *“Just do the work. Make a phone call and then another, don’t worry about the big places, hit the tiny places...just keep at it. Just keep going at it, speaking with people passionately and don’t take no for an answer”*.

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APPENDIX A: SMOKE-FREE HOUSING PRESENTATION



Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

Definition:

A ban on smoking in all or part of a building, including the individual units



Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

- Why is this an issue?
 - Second-hand smoke is a health hazard, especially for children and those with existing chronic health conditions
 - Ventilation won't help
 - Complaints from tenants
 - Demand from public (2006 Ipsos-Reid survey, Waterloo Housing Survey)



Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

- Why is this an issue for social & affordable housing sector?
 - Citizens with lower incomes carry the burden of illness in our society
 - Fewer (if non-existent) options for relocation
 - Potential cost savings
 - New area – start with publicly funded sector

Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

Action Across Canada

- Federal government
- Provincial government
- Private sector
- Non-profit & social housing sector

Resources – see handouts

Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

- Peterborough perspective



Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

- Questions



Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Dwellings

- Next Steps



APPENDIX B: PRESS RELEASES

Communications Office
 Peterborough County-City Health Unit
 10 Hospital Drive
 Peterborough, ON K9J 8M1
 (705) 743-1000, ext. 391
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Thanks to New Smoke-Free Housing Policies, Hundreds of Area Residents Breathing Easier

Tuesday, October 19, 2010, Peterborough

Four more local social housing providers announced today that they have formalized smoke-free policies to protect their residents from the health hazards of second-hand smoke.

The new policies were recently approved by the respective Boards of Directors for Keene Non-Profit Housing, St. Barnabus Housing, Kinsmen Garden Court of Peterborough, and the YWCA of Peterborough, Victoria and Haliburton.

“We commend the leadership of these social housing providers for implementing these health protection measures as second-hand smoke causes not only cancer, but is also responsible for the development of asthma in children and will make existing chronic conditions like diabetes worse,” stated Dr. Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit. “People who need to use social housing have virtually no options to move if smoke from their neighbours’ apartment is drifting into their home, making smoke-free policies like these even more important.”

Dr. Pellizzari emphasized that the creation of smoke-free policies in social housing does not mean people are denied access to the housing they need. It simply means that people who smoke must do so outside of the building, similar to existing workplace and public space policies. In fact, these types of policies have been in effect in local housing for years such as St. John’s Retirement Home, Crossroads, Cameron House, the Youth Emergency Shelter and Brock Mission.

“In the initial stages of exploring a smoke-free policy, we spent a great deal of time listening to and addressing tenants’ concerns about discrimination and the possibility of conflict between smoking and non-smoking tenants,” explained Catharine Lamoureux, Manager of Housing with the YWCA. “After renting our first smoke-free unit at Centennial Crescent, there has been nothing but positive feedback from within the community and perspective tenants. Current tenants who smoke have asked for cessation materials and non smoking tenants have asked for a new smoke-free lease.”

The Health Unit supported the development of these policies by educating boards of directors and residents about their rights and responsibilities in terms of smoke-free spaces and

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provided examples of smoke-free policies. In addition, the Health Unit offers a variety of cessation programs to support residents who want to kick the habit. Anyone who would like to register for individual or group cessation counselling programs can do so by calling (705) 743-1000, ext. 330.

Research continues to demonstrate the positive health impact of smoke-free policies. The most recent study from Scotland showed that a reduction in children's levels of asthma attacks can be traced to the implementation of smoke-free policies. (see <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1002861?query=TOC>). The implementation of a smoke-free policy within Centennial Crescent is noteworthy since it is the first local provider of social housing for families to take this step.

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New Smoke-Free Policies for Subsidized Housing Established in Peterborough and Millbrook

Wednesday, April 14, 2010, Peterborough

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit announced today that three new smoke-free policies in subsidized housing units are now in effect thanks to the leadership of local social housing providers.

Millbrook Non-Profit Housing of Millbrook, St. Giles Senior Citizens Residence of Peterborough and Maryland Place of Peterborough have each created policies to ensure their buildings are completely smoke-free.

"This is an important achievement because it marks the first time smoke-free policies have been implemented in public housing in our area and serves as wonderful testimony to what can be accomplished when residents band together to protect their right to clean air," said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health of the Health Unit. "As we have heard recently in the media, smoke-free policies also lead to long-term public health benefits such as lower hospitalization rates."

According to Health Canada, there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke so the Health Unit is encouraging landlords of low- and moderate-income residences to implement similar policies to protect the health of their tenants and provide them with an opportunity to live in smoke-free housing.

No construction or mechanical fix can keep smoke from moving from one unit to another. Until smoke-free policies exist, anyone living in a social housing unit cannot be guaranteed a smoke-free home. The option to move is extremely limited for these residents.

These policies stipulate that all new leases signed by residents will include a provision that no smoking will be allowed inside their units or in common areas. Units currently occupied by smokers will transition to becoming smoke-free over time as these residents move out. The Health Unit is offering cessation services to current smokers in the meantime.

"Notwithstanding the 'grandfathering' of current smokers, the leadership from these three organizations is a very important victory and has already encouraged other housing units to also adopt smoke-free policies," said Dr. Pellizzari.

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For more information about smoke-free housing, please visit
<http://www.smokefreehousing.ca/index.html> .

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