

PROMOTING SMOKE-FREE MULTI-UNIT DWELLINGS IN THE PETERBOROUGH COUNTY CITY REGION: SUMMARY

Given the knowledge that there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS) and that exposure can lead to a variety of negative health outcomes, many jurisdictions in Canada and internationally have adopted laws creating smoke-free public places. As smoke-free places have become the norm, many are also electing to make their own homes smoke-free to further reduce exposure to SHS. While individuals living in multi-unit dwellings (MUDs), residential units that share a wall, ceiling or floor with another residential unit, can make their units smoke-free, they may be involuntarily exposed to SHS in their home if others within the building or complex smoke in their own units or near windows, doors or air intakes.

The need to protect residents of MUDs from exposure to SHS has been identified by many both in Canada and internationally. 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. The LEARN Documentation of Practice Report, *“Promoting smoke-free multi-unit dwellings in the Peterborough County-City Region”* highlights these efforts.

One strategy used by PCCHU to encourage smoke-free housing is the provision of support to landlords and tenants submitting applications to the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board (the Board) related to tobacco-use within their MUDs. Board cases are opportunities to not only assist local tenants and landlords, but also to build broader support and momentum for the smoke-free MUDs movement in the region. Support provided by 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.

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 smoke-free housing policies have been developed in the region. PCCHU staff connects with individual housing providers, housing and landlord organizations, and with landlords where there have been complaints about tobacco-use filed, to share information on the value of smoke-free housing policies. Staff have found that when connecting with housing providers to discuss such a policy, it is important to highlight local success stories and champions for smoke-free housing, addressing any misconceptions they may have about a tobacco-free policy, and promoting the business case for going smoke-free. They have found it is critical to be persistent when encouraging housing providers to consider smoke-free policies. 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 can also promote the policy that has been developed to the broader community through press releases and other means.

For more information on this work, please see the full report available on the PTCC website at <https://www.ptcc-cfc.on.ca/learn/DoPs/>