

Non-Smokers' Rights Association Smoking and Health Action Foundation

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Smoke-free Policies Make Good Dollars and Sense: The Business Case for Smoke-free Multi-unit Housing

1. *Second-hand smoke costs landlords money*

Landlords report that it typically costs around two to three times as much to turn over a unit where heavy smoking has occurred as it does for a non-smoking unit. In some extreme cases the costs can skyrocket. Consider these approximate figures quoted by landlords in Toronto and southern Ontario, based on a 2-3 bedroom apartment:

| <i>Item</i> | <i>No Smoking in the Unit</i> | <i>Heavy Smoking in the Unit</i> |
|--|--|--|
| Walls & ceilings: Preparation and painting | Primer and paint: \$300 - \$450 | Sanding and cleaning to remove tar and nicotine, stain killer primer, extra paint: \$500 - \$900 |
| Carpet (may not be applicable) | Shampooing/steam cleaning: 0 - \$100 | Shampooing/steam cleaning or re- moval and replacement: \$100 - \$700 |
| Cleaning | \$250 | \$350 - \$500 |
| Bathroom and kitchen | Included in cleaning fee quoted above | Could be included in above fee, or could involve removal and replacement: \$15,000 - \$18,000 ¹ |
| Total | \$550 - \$800 | \$950 - \$2,100 and could go as high as approximately \$20,000 |

2. *Smoking means an increased risk of fire*

Statistics from the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners indicate that smokers' materials and open flame (cigarettes, lighters, and matches) remain the #1 ignition source in fatal residential fires. Between 1993 and 2002 (most recent figures available) there were 9,414 fires, over \$231 million in losses, 688 injuries and 94 deaths caused by lit smokers' materials.² A smoke-free building reduces the risk of fire, fire damage, injuries and deaths by eliminating lit smoking materials from the interior of buildings. Landlords who implement smoke-free policies not only reduce the risk of fire but may also be eligible for reduced insurance premiums.

¹ One large landlord in Toronto reported that in approximately 10% of cases where heavy smoking has occurred, the entire kitchen and bathroom must be ripped out due to the smell of second-hand smoke impregnated in the wood and laminates, as well as because of the presence of stains and burns on countertops.

² Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners. Annual report 2002: Fire losses in Canada. www.ccfmfc.ca/stats/en/report_e_02.pdf.

3. Smoke-free does not mean increased vacancies and higher turn-over rates

A recent survey of landlords and property managers in Minnesota gauged perceptions and attitudes regarding smoke-free rental housing. Of those who had implemented smoke-free policies, responses were generally positive and the vast majority indicated they were likely to continue offering smoke-free housing. They reported almost entirely neutral or positive effects on vacancy rates, turnover, amount of rent that could be charged, and staff time required to manage the building (all key factors in profitability). However, landlords and property managers with no experience offering smoke-free housing had negative attitudes and perceptions due to concerns that it would constitute discrimination, would increase vacancy rates, or that it would cost them extra money for enforcement.³ The take home message is that a smoke-free policy does not translate into higher costs for landlords and property managers.

4. There is demand for smoke-free housing

The majority of Canadians do not smoke, and approximately three quarters of Canadian households do not permit smoking indoors.⁴ Smoke-free homes are already a social norm. Surveys commissioned by the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network and conducted by Ipsos Reid in 2006 found that 64% of Ontario respondents would likely choose a smoke-free building if such a choice existed.⁵ When *Envy*, Canada's first 100% smoke-free condominium hit the market in Vancouver, it sold out just as fast as other condominiums built by the same developer. Globe General Agencies, a large landlord in Winnipeg which went smoke-free in 2006, has not suffered from its decision and has people lining up on waiting lists for a smoke-free unit. *"This is just all part of providing a safe and healthy environment for our tenants. Many businesses, like bars, restaurants and hotels, have found that no-smoking rules are good for business. Doing the same for multi-unit dwellings is just part of that trend,"* reports Globe General president Richard Morantz.⁶ Likewise, a 53-unit smoke-free mixed housing complex in downtown Toronto owned by the Newtonbrook United Church – Taiwanese United Church Toronto (NUC-TUCT) Non-Profit Homes Corporation has had no problem with vacancies. *"Since we opened in 2006 we have only ever had one person walk away when they found out we had a no-smoking policy,"* president Evelyn Robertson states. *"We have a waiting list full of people who want to live here."*

5. Smoke-free housing is neither illegal nor discriminatory

It is legal for a landlord anywhere in Canada to include a no-smoking policy in the lease. A smoke-free housing policy is not a smoker-free policy that prevents smokers from renting accommodation. Just as smokers are asked to step outside public places and workplaces for a cigarette, a smoke-free housing policy requires them to do the same. Smokers can live in smoke-free multi-unit dwellings as long as they follow the rules like everyone else.

³ Hewett, MJ et al. Second-hand smoke in apartment buildings: Renter and owner or manager perspectives. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, Vol. 9, Suppl. 1, Jan. 2007: S39-S47.

⁴ Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey. Summary of annual results for 2006. www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/ctums-esutc_2006/ann_summary-sommaire_e.html.

⁵ Ontario Tobacco-Free Network. Highlights of Ipsos Reid research on drifting second-hand smoke in multi-unit dwellings. March 27, 2007.

⁶ Ontario Tobacco-Free Network. Ontario majority wants smoke-free apartments. March 27, 2007.