

20 seniors housing sites to go smoke-free

Phased-in program over next 18 months

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The Edmonton Journal

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

EDMONTON - The city's largest provider of subsidized housing for seniors is phasing in a no-smoking policy for all its buildings over the next 18 months.

Tenants living in Greater Edmonton Foundation apartments who smoke will be grandfathered in, and will be allowed to continue smoking in their own suites as long as they can do so safely, Susan McCarthy, manager of marketing and administration, said Monday.

"They are more independent and it's kind of perceived as a more private space -- it's their own self-contained apartment," she said.

However, new tenants moving into a GEF apartment buildings will be subject to the new policy, and smoking will only be allowed outdoors in designated areas, she said.

Virginia Park was GEF's first building to pilot the policy and it went smoke-free on May 1.

Four more sites will go smoke-free in August, with the rest phased in over the next 18 months. The foundation operates more than 20 buildings and has more than 2,000 tenants.

Smokers make up between 10 and 15 per cent of tenants, McCarthy said.

"We have been having tenants meetings with them and explaining things," she said.

"Overall, it's seen as a positive move.

"It is something they will get used to over time. For the people who do have to smoke, they will be provided with something outside that is safe for them," she said.