

# Vancouver woman demands smoke-free housing

**Gerry Bellett**

Vancouver Sun

*Monday, February 04, 2008*

The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal has agreed to hear the case of a woman who claims she has been the victim of discrimination because housing authorities wouldn't provide her with smoke-free public housing.

Sheila Abraham is on a disability pension for a number of conditions and has been diagnosed with hyper-reactive airway disease, which is caused and exacerbated by second-hand smoke, according to a complaint filed with the tribunal.

She lives on the second floor of Heather Place, an 86-unit public housing complex near Vancouver General Hospital, and complains that she has been exposed to increasing amounts of tobacco and marijuana smoke from neighbours since the spring of 2006.

Abraham claims she has been attempting to deal with the situation since then but without success. She is complaining that given the known harm of second-hand smoke, the failure of the Greater Vancouver Housing Corp. and provincial government agencies to provide her with smoke-free subsidized housing was discriminatory.

The ministry of housing and the GVHC deny any discrimination. They said they have tried to satisfy her concerns and convinced two of her neighbouring smokers to move, but had failed to get a third person living beneath Abraham to move.

The GVRC is said to have offered her the option of moving into another smoke-free residence, but tribunal member Marlene Tyshynski found that there was a dispute between the parties as to why that option "was not effective."

But she dismissed applications from the ministry and the GVHC that the claim should be rejected.

The ministry argued it had attempted to accommodate Abraham's concerns, but Tyshynski said she didn't have enough information regarding what the ministry had done.

Tyshynski said the dispute required a full hearing with an opportunity for cross-examination.

No date has been set for the hearing.

*gbellett@png.canwest.com*