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February 4, 2009

Letter to the Editor
Victoria Times-Colonist

**Subject: *Smoking Policy for Detox Facility (“Additional detox beds to cut waits,”
January 31, 2009)***

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon and the BC Lung Association, which make up the Clean Air Coalition of B.C., feel it necessary to “clear the air” on smoke-free policies for detox facilities.

Some people have concerns about the community medical detox unit being included under the health authority’s smoke-free premise policy, stating that such a policy would be a barrier for seeking treatment. Dr. Joy Johnson, the UBC Site Director for the Centre for Addictions Research of BC and author of ‘Tobacco Control in the Context of Mental Illness and Addiction: Reviewing the Evidence (2006)’ recommends that: “Tobacco treatment for people with mental illness or addictions should be integrated into existing mental health and addiction services”, and “Smoke-free spaces support and encourage individuals with mental illness and addictions to remain smoke-free”. The Aurora Centre Residential Treatment Centre in Vancouver is a BC example of a drug treatment facility that has a strict tobacco-free policy, a facility that treats their patients successfully.

Given that smoke-free policies are now strongly supported by evidence, we should focus our efforts on how to better support and manage nicotine withdrawal for clients entering health care and addiction treatment facilities. The time has come to fully integrate smoke-free practices into the health care setting.

Sincerely,

R.F. Bobbe Wood, MA
President & CEO
Heart and Stroke Foundation
of B.C. & Yukon

Scott McDonald
Executive Director
BC Lung Association

cc. Jack Boomer, Director, Clean Air Coalition of B.C.