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REBEL SMOKERS OUT TO SEA

Smokers retreat offshore to avoid rising tide of tobacco bans

Vancouver, BC – May 26, 2008 – It's not pirates that you see mooring off English Bay, but rebel smokers who have exiled themselves offshore to enjoy their Havana cigars, says smoke-free advocacy organization the Clean Air Coalition of BC (Clean Air Coalition).

Outlawed from smoking at their former haunts, entrepreneur Shane Gibson and friends got creative – using a motorboat as a legal outpost for their favourite bad habit.

“We understand the importance of keeping smoke away from children and others who want to avoid it,” says Gibson. “But we’re being responsible, and we’re not conflicting with anyone’s right to a smoke-free environment.”

Leave tobacco lovers to sort through the loopholes. There’s more to be achieved by fostering solidarity for a smoke-free BC say health advocates the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon and the BC Lung Association.

Together, the two organizations make up advocacy organization the Clean Air Coalition of BC, which recently launched its new province-wide campaign - *Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC*.

“We’re calling on organizations and individuals to voice their support for a smoke-free BC,” says Bobbe Wood, President & CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon. “BC has made significant progress on tobacco control and we think the timing is right to get even more proactive.”

According to a recent poll commissioned by the CAC, three quarters of British Columbians feel the same way.

“Eighty three percent of British Columbians we surveyed support increased smoke-free rental housing, 82 percent would like to see more support programs targeted to high-smoking populations, and 78 percent support subsidized nicotine replacement therapy,” continued Wood. “People want to breathe clean air.”

Scott McDonald, Executive Director for the BC Lung Association also agrees with the polls, “At one time BC was considered a national leader in tobacco control. Today BC has the opportunity to re-establish its leadership by further investing in proven tobacco use reduction measures.

“Just look at our rebel smokers as an example of how far smokers are forced to go today to indulge their habit,” continued McDonald.

When asked about the *Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC* Campaign, Gibson replied, “I like the *Imagine* concept and its focus on the positive versus the negative. We all know the health risks associated with smoking.

“But while I respect the obligation to protect people from the harms of second-hand smoke – I guess I’m just not quite ready to give up Friday night cigars with the boys...yet,” added Gibson.

Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC organizer, the Clean Air Coalition, joins others in raising awareness of World No Tobacco Day 2008, celebrated May 31, 2008.

Register your support for a smoke-free BC – visit the Clean Air Coalition of BC website at www.cleanaircoalitionbc.com.



Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC Survey Results

The Clean Air Coalition of BC recently commissioned BC Stats to poll a random selection of 600 British Columbians to gauge their support for the 11 key tobacco control/reduction use measures proposed under the *Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC* campaign. Public support was as follows:

1. 73 percent are in favour of 100 percent smoke-free public places --- including outdoor patios, parks and beaches.
2. 82 percent are in favour of the prohibition of smoking in motor vehicles when a person under the age of 19 is present.
3. 83 percent are in favour of increased smoke-free multi-unit dwelling options, such as apartment & condominiums.
4. 71 percent are in favour of the prohibition of tobacco sales in pharmacies.
5. 78 percent are in favour of subsidized Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and pharmacotherapy for BC smokers ready to quit.
6. 73 percent are in favour of increased tobacco taxes, which is a proven tobacco prevention and reduction strategy.
7. 82 percent are in favour of increased prevention and cessation efforts to support individuals within groups where smoking rates are very high, including individuals with mental health and addictions issues and Aboriginal peoples. These efforts will still respect the traditional use of tobacco products by Aboriginal people.
8. 72 percent are in favour of ongoing mass media campaigns to counter tobacco company marketing and promotional activities, including those related to spit tobacco. Tobacco companies are increasingly marketing it in the face of smoking bans.
9. 73 percent are in favour of restricting the sale of tobacco products only to regulated retail outlets, much like that for alcohol.
10. 90 percent are in favour of encouraging, through education, no smoking in homes when children are present.
11. 85 percent are in favour of funding tobacco control program using monies from tobacco litigation court judgments or settlements.

For more information or to arrange an interview contact:

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Outlawed from smoking at their former haunts, entrepreneur Shane Gibson (centre) and friends (left to right: Angelika Voss, Alan Crawford, Sergio Hernandez, Shane Gibson, Yam Delapena and Michale Chaplin) got creative – using a motorboat as a legal outpost for their favourite bad habit.