



ONTARIO MAJORITY WANTS SMOKE-FREE APARTMENTS

Neighbours' smoke penetrates into almost half of Ontario apartments Ontario health coalition kick-starts dialogue in fastest growing housing market

Toronto – March 27, 2007 – New research shows second-hand smoke infiltrates the apartments of almost two million Ontarians, and a clear majority of the province's four million multi-unit dwellers would like the choice to live in smoke-free buildings.

The Ontario Tobacco-free Network (OTN), a coalition of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division; the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario; and The Lung Association discovered this demand for smoke-free living after commissioning two major studies by the leading market research firm Ipsos Reid.

"It's the first hard data on how people feel about second-hand smoke in multi-unit dwellings," says Irene Gallagher, speaking for the OTN. "This is a big issue, since more than one in three Ontarians live in multi-unit dwellings, and the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation says it's the fastest growing segment of the housing market."

Ipsos Reid senior vice-president John Wright says smart businesses can exploit this untapped demand. "This is real market data, verified by studying a large sample two times over a six month period," says Wright, a consumer trends expert. "It's a good way to differentiate your housing product. Landlords elsewhere who've tried it say it's good for business."

While researching second-hand smoke, medically proven as a serious health risk at any level of exposure, the OTN discovered that landlords in Ontario are just beginning to hear that housing marketers in other jurisdictions are relying on the market's invisible hand to cut through bureaucratic red tape and confusion about smoke-free buildings. One of the biggest landlords in Western Canada, Globe General Agencies, has people lining up on waiting lists for the smoke-free buildings it began offering last fall in Manitoba, with no significant problems.

"This is just all part of providing a safe and healthy environment for our tenants," said Globe General president Richard Morantz. "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." In Vancouver, a new condominium project being marketed as smoke-free is meeting with "fabulous demand," says Annette Denk of Sussex Realty, the agent selling units in the building.

This new trend of voluntary, market-driven smoke-free housing is growing in progressive jurisdictions like Michigan. More than 6,000 apartment units have gone smoke-free and landlords reported no downside, according to Jim Bergman, of the Smoke-free Environments Law Project in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"Building managers have been pleasantly surprised at how well it's going," says Michigan's Bergman. "In our experience with hundreds of landlords, getting cooperation from residents with voluntary smoke-free policies has been excellent. There have been no problems and certainly no evictions. When it's a matter of free choice people play by the rules. If they sign an agreement saying they'll follow a smoke-free policy, they do."

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Landlords in Michigan, like Globe General in Winnipeg, are phasing in the no-smoking policy. New residents agree in writing to abide by the non-smoking rule; as well, in some buildings the existing residents agree that all smoking will end by an agreed date. This allows the change to be lead by social and market forces, rather than government regulation. "Neighbours tend to know when others are being un-neighbourly and not following the agreed rules," says Globe General president Richard Morantz.

In releasing this data today, the OTN hopes to further a dialogue among Ontario residents, landlords and condo and building owners about the opportunities and choices to make homes healthier with voluntary, market-driven no-smoking policies.

Last week a two-day symposium on the subject was held in Toronto, with attendees from across Canada and from the US, including landlords, building operators and health groups. For more information, contact the OTN at 1-800-972-2636 and at <http://www.theotn.org>.

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About The OTN

The Ontario Tobacco-free Network is a provincial interagency network consisting of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division (CCS), the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario (HSFO) and the The Lung Association (TLA). The network is funded by the Ministry of Health Promotion and supported in-kind by CCS, HSFO, TLA and the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco (OCAT). The members and partners of the OTN work together to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco use. The OTN supports a network of local tobacco-free councils, coordinated by public health staff and community volunteers, in their tobacco work throughout Ontario.

About Ipsos Reid

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