

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Vancouver Continues to Lose the Lead on Smoke-Free Legislation

*BC Lung Association and Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon Urge BC to Step up Tobacco Control Leadership*

**Vancouver, BC – July 31, 2008** – Leading health advocates, the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon, which make up the Clean Air Coalition of BC, are calling upon provincial and municipal governments to follow Newfoundland and Labrador's lead and adopt a no-smoking policy for residents living in non-profit housing complexes. Under new laws announced today, the City of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, will require tenants to sign leases that include an agreement not to smoke indoors.

"We want BC to prioritize smoke-free housing legislation in the non-profit sector and make it a priority in BC," says Bobbe Wood, President and CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon. "People living in subsidized housing don't always have the option to move, and thus are forced to breathe unwanted smoke that infiltrate their homes from neighbouring units.

"We believe it is time governments take the lead and implement legislation resulting in a specified number of smoke-free buildings for people who want and need to live smoke-free for health reasons," continued Wood.

"Asking smokers to take it outside not only protects their neighbours who don't want to breathe second-hand smoke in their own homes, but can be an effective motivator for smokers ready to quit," says Scott McDonald, Executive Director for the BC Lung Association. He emphasizes the emerging demand for smoke-free housing, especially for people with chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and respiratory illnesses.

"Besides," says McDonald, "smoke-free housing is good business. The benefits not only include a healthier and cleaner environment but significantly reduced maintenance costs and a reduced risk of fires."

"A decade ago BC was considered the national leader in tobacco control but has since lost its footing. Today BC has the opportunity to re-establish its leadership by acting swiftly and decisively on issues such as the legislation of smoke-free policies in non-profit housing," added Wood. "British Columbians are protected from exposure to second-hand smoke in most work and public places, but residents of apartments and condominiums are regularly exposed to unwanted smoke infiltrating their units."

"We feel with non-smokers outnumbering smokers four to one, and clear consensus that exposure to second-hand smoke is harmful at any level, the timing is right to move towards a smoke-free B.C. – with increased smoke-free housing a necessary step along the way," says McDonald.

According to a recent BC Stats survey commissioned by the Clean Air Coalition of BC, 83 percent of British Columbians surveyed support an increase in smoke-free housing.

#### **About the Clean Air Coalition of B.C.**

*The Clean Air Coalition of BC, is operated by the B.C. Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon. The Coalition exists to promote smoke-free environments, tobacco use prevention and advocate for universal access to quit smoking support.*

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