

Nov 15 2006

## Clean air campaign launched to butt out smoking

By JOHN KING Observer Reporter

He can't stand seeing people smoking, talking on their cellphones and driving all at the same time.

But while a car remains a private place where people can do what they please, lighting up in public places such as smoking rooms in bars, airports and on school grounds are the new targets in the fight against smoking.

Coun. Peter Couldwell said it's about time.

With Premier Gordon Campbell unveiling an aggressive timeline to rid indoor public spaces of smokers, Quesnel looks to begin a plan of its own to create a no-smoking bylaw.

For Andrea Fagan, a tobacco reduction co-ordinator with Northern Health, the city sits on the cusp of real opportunity.

"It's worthwhile for the city to consider moving forward with a clean air bylaw," she said.

The Liberal government wants to remove smoking rooms from public indoor spaces and make puffing on a cigarette against the law across the province.

Coun. Peter Couldwell said Quesnel is well positioned to enact a no-smoking bylaw of its own before the province-wide ban.

"We're just about one step ahead of them," he said.

"We need to modernize our bylaw to make it up-to-date. The city will be ready to jump on the bandwagon."

The city's Tobacco Free Zone initiative launches Friday during a Quesnel Millionaires game.

The campaign will see signs posted at Twin Arenas as well as Quesnel & District Arts and Recreation Centre.

Meant to discourage smoking at the two entrances into the sports facilities where children often congregate, the campaign should not be confused with any sort of bylaw.

"They're two separate initiatives," Fagan said.

"There's the 100 per cent smoke free bylaw which is enforceable.

"The smoke-free zones is not a bylaw, but a initiative to discourage smoking through good citizenship."

She hopes putting an end to the culture of tobacco consumption happens sooner than later, adding it'll probably take the provincial government at least until 2008 before it can legislate any sort of province-wide smoking ban.

NH Medical Health Officer Lorna Medd said neither province nor the city are going too far when looking at smoking bans.

"Provincial legislation has been a powerful lever in other provinces," she said.

"Many large municipalities such as Victoria, Vancouver, Delta and others have been smoke-free for a number of years.

"B.C. is the second last province to go this route.

Medd believes if workers are protected from second-hand smoke through WorkSafe B.C. regulations, then everybody else should be as well.

"It does not compute for the public to be exposed when workers are not," she said.

Medd compares the current debate surrounding tobacco to the drug opium.

"The precedent was set when opium smoking was made illegal," she said.

"It became apparent opium was a destructive substance and now again we're dealing with another extremely destructive substance, tobacco."