



## ***IMAGINE! A Smoke-Free BC Campaign***

### **A Few Steps Closer**



January 2009

## ***IMAGINE! A SMOKE-FREE BC CAMPAIGN***

The *Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC Campaign* (*Imagine Campaign*) was launched in January 2008 by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon and the BC Lung Association, who constitute the Clean Air Coalition of BC (CAC), to make BC the leader in tobacco control in Canada.

The *Imagine* campaign is advocating on behalf of British Columbians for bold and cutting edge government action toward creating a smoke-free BC. The CAC has identified eleven specific tobacco use reduction and protection principles that would establish BC as a national leader in tobacco control, and significantly contribute to BC fulfilling its goal of being the healthiest jurisdiction ever to host an Olympic Games (See Appendix A).

To this end, the *Imagine* campaign is engaging key stakeholders, organizations and individuals province-wide to join forces in support of these eleven principles and to “Imagine” what BC would be like if these eleven principles were adopted in BC.

We’re pleased to report that to date, more than 400 individuals and over 25 organizations have registered their support for the *Imagine* campaign. The CAC has kicked off another winning advocacy campaign that invites British Columbians to participate collectively in substantially reducing BC smoking rates and improving the health of British Columbians.

### **WHY THE *IMAGINE* CAMPAIGN IS NEEDED**

*Imagine! A Smoke-Free BC* campaign organizers feel the time is right to introduce an ambitious tobacco control agenda. It is advocating for bold government action to achieve the eleven *Imagine* principles listed in Appendix A. Primarily, the campaign urges government to implement every proven means possible to:

- Make it harder for children and youth to start smoking;
- Make it easier for those addicted to quit;
- Protect British Columbians from exposure to second-hand smoke; and
- Educate the public about the tactics and strategies used by the tobacco industry to increase uptake and consumption

Even though BC has the lowest smoking rate in Canada, proportionally we still have the third highest number of smokers in the country, with an estimated number of smokers at 600,000.

Further, the health consequences for British Columbians are huge. Tobacco use contributes to more than 6,000 deaths in BC every year, and thousands more have a serious illness caused by smoking. Tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death and disease in this country. And the harmful effects of smoking do not just impact those who smoke. Second-hand smoke causes serious disease and death in non-smoking adults, and even brief exposure can be dangerous. Second-hand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death among Canadians after alcohol and smoking.

Equally alarming is the economic burden of tobacco use in BC. The costs of treating

tobacco related illness in BC is estimated at more than \$500 million a year. The cost to employers' of smoking employees is also striking. The Conference Board of Canada estimate that costs per year to employers who employ smokers, such as higher insurance premiums and lost productivity due to smoke breaks and absenteeism, have increased from \$2,565 per smoking employee in 1997 to \$3,396 in 2006. The bottom line is that tobacco use represents a huge burden to society.

The CAC is confident that British Columbians are ready for bold action. Societal norms have shifted, and British Columbians no longer accept that breathing second-hand smoke must be tolerated at work, in the community or at home. People who don't smoke outnumber those that do by more than four to one in BC, and a clear consensus exists that tobacco use is deadly and exposure to second-hand smoke is harmful at any level. In order to ensure that all British Columbians enjoy a healthy life, and reach their optimal lifespan, it is imperative that strong legislation and policies are advanced to reduce the harm caused by tobacco use.

## **WHERE WE ARE TODAY: A FEW STEPS CLOSER**

The CAC applauds the provincial government for significant progress on reducing the harm caused by tobacco use in recent years. 2008 was a stellar year on several fronts in tobacco control in BC and we are pleased to report that the government has implemented a number of our key principles, making important advancements in reducing the harm caused by tobacco use. While there is still a long way to go in BC, it is important to acknowledge what the provincial government has done to advance our key *Imagine* campaign principles and applaud their efforts to making these goals a reality. Some key government initiatives that support our principles include:

### **Principle 1. IMAGINE! 100% smoke-free public places - including outdoor patios, parks and beaches.**

In March 2008, the provincial government enacted province-wide legislation to ban smoking in all indoor public places and workplaces, including outdoor buffer zones such as 3m from public doorways, open windows and air intakes. BC now has consistent legislation that applies equally across the province to protect all workers and the public from the hazards of second-hand smoke exposure.

Recent provincial legislation also bans smoking in a handful of outdoor public spaces, including transit shelters, on all K-12 school grounds, and a province-wide policy that bans smoking in all health authority facilities effective October 2008.

Municipalities have the authority to create smoking bylaws that exceeds provincial law, and a number have implemented their own smoke-free bylaws banning smoking on outdoor patios, including the Capital Regional District, the City of Richmond, the District of Squamish, the City of Surrey, the City of Vancouver, and the City of White Rock. As more municipalities move to enact legislation to ban smoking on outdoor patios, the provincial government is encouraged to consider harmonizing the provincial legislation to ensure province-wide consistency and protect the health of all British Columbians regardless of where they live.

**Principle 2. IMAGINE! Prohibition of smoking in motor vehicles when a person under the age of 19 is present.**

In April 2008, the provincial government introduced amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act to protect children under the age of 16 from second-hand smoke while they are passengers in motor vehicles. B.C. joins a number of other Canadian jurisdictions that have or plan to enact legislation that bans smoking in cars when children are present, including Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Ontario and Yukon Territory.

Some municipalities in BC are enacting municipal bylaws that will exceed the provincial standard by protecting children and youth under the age of 19. The CAC is pleased with the government's action on this matter, and as it continues to evolve in the province, the CAC encourages the government to harmonize the legislation to create the stronger standard.

**Principle 3. IMAGINE! Increased smoke-free multi-unit dwellings, such as apartment & condominiums.**

In March 2008, BC enacted legislation to ban smoking in common areas and entrances of apartments and condominiums, including elevators, hallways, parking garages, party or entertainment rooms, laundry facilities, lobbies and exercise areas. The legislation does not apply to private units in multi-unit dwellings, but BC went further than all other jurisdictions in Canada by enacting legislation that also bans smoking within 3 metres (buffer zones) of public entranceways to apartment buildings and condos, open windows and air intakes.

Further, BC is a leader in Canada in terms of the work that is being done to promote and support an increase in smoke-free housing in multi-unit dwellings. Funded by ActNow BC, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon, on behalf of the BC Healthy Living Alliance, is leading the Smoke-free Housing in Multi-Unit Dwellings Initiative to increase smoke-free multi-housing options across BC. BC now has the first ever website in Canada dedicated to assisting landlords and strata corporations to create more smoke-free options for British Columbians living in apartments and condominiums. The website features prominent government Cabinet Ministers that acknowledge that landlords can create new tenancy agreements that ban or limit where smoking is permitted on their rental property. Visit [www.smokefreehousingbc.ca](http://www.smokefreehousingbc.ca)

**Principle 5. IMAGINE! Subsidized Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and pharmacotherapy for BC smokers ready to quit.**

The Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport funds the free smoking cessation programs QuitNow.ca and QuitNow by Phone, which make up QuitNow services in BC. QuitNow services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all British Columbians. These programs exceed every other jurisdiction in Canada by providing around the clock service and also services in up to 130 languages.

Beyond the assistance offered by QuitNow services, in 2007 and 2008, the BC provincial government implemented a number of pilot projects to target high-risk populations to quit smoking.

#### Smoking Cessation Program for Foster Parents & Youth in Care

In 2008, the Ministry of Children and Family Development implemented the smoking cessation program for foster parents and youth in care. The goal of the program was to support and assist youth in care, foster parents, and other individuals in foster homes who wished to stop smoking. Free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and pharmacotherapy was provided for a 6-month period for those voluntarily registered for the program.

#### Quit Smoking Now Pilot

In January 2007, the provincial government implemented the Quit Smoking Now pilot, a voluntary smoking cessation program available to British Columbians on income assistance who wanted to quit smoking. The pilot, offered through the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, provided nicotine patches and gum for three months, as well as counseling support from QuitNow services to clients who signed up for the program. Over 130,000 clients were sent information on the program, and those that smoked were eligible to receive either nicotine patches or gum.

#### Quittin' Time

In October 2007, the provincial government launched Quittin' Time, a comprehensive smoking cessation program to help B.C Public Service employees and their immediate family members quit smoking. Participants who register with the program and have extended health coverage may claim reimbursement for smoking cessation products and eligible prescription drugs.

### **Conclusion**

Ten years ago, smoking was still permitted in some bars, pubs and restaurants. Now, thanks to provincial government legislation, smoking is banned in any indoor public setting or workplace. Reducing the number of places that people can smoke reduces prevalence and encourages some people to quit smoking completely. It also changes the social norm so that smoking is no longer seen in these public places. Hence, taking action in the policy area helps reduce prevalence and changes social norms (or denormalization).

However, reducing and eliminating tobacco use is a complex issue, with no single initiative being the silver bullet. The provincial government has made significant progress in a number of key policy and programming areas, which collectively help reduce tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke, and encourage smoking cessation. Some of the initiatives meet or exceed our expectations, and for that reason we want to acknowledge the work the provincial government has done to reduce tobacco use in BC.

*IMAGINE! A Smoke-Free BC – A Few Steps Closer*

As we continue on the journey towards a smoke-free BC, we urge the provincial government to build on the solid foundation of good work that has been initiated over the past year, and consider implementing our other best practice principles as we collectively work together to make BC a smoke-free province.

## **APPENDIX A**

### ***Eleven Imagine Campaign principles***

1. 100% smoke-free public places - including outdoor patios, parks and beaches.
2. Prohibition of smoking in motor vehicles when a person under the age of 19 is present.
3. Increased smoke-free multi-unit dwelling options, such as apartment & condominiums.
4. Prohibition of tobacco sales in pharmacies.
5. Subsidized Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and pharmacotherapy for BC smokers ready to quit.
6. Increased tobacco taxes - a proven tobacco prevention and reduction strategy.
7. Increased prevention and cessation efforts to support individuals identified as having higher than average smoking rates, 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. 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. Restricting the sale of tobacco products to regulated retail outlets, as is the case for alcohol.
10. Encourage, through education, no smoking in homes when children are present.
11. Funding of tobacco control programs using monies from tobacco litigation court judgments or settlements.