

Sample Briefing Note

CITY OF BELLEVILLE COUNCIL

Briefing Note Smoke-free Playing Fields

DATE: May 22, 2009

ISSUE

UNfiltered is a group of youth from Hastings and Prince Edward Counties who advocate to protect their peers and children from the tobacco industry and its deadly products. In May 2009, UNfiltered is partnering with Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit and local school children to advocate for smoke-free playing fields through the City of Belleville.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council of the City of Belleville vote to erect “No smoking within 25 m of boundaries”¹ signage at all municipal playing fields.

RATIONALE

The Smoke-free Ontario Act currently covers 100% of indoor workplaces and public places. However, any municipal by-law which is more restrictive is supported. Outdoor recreation facilities and parks are established to promote healthy activities and smoke-free by-laws fit with this idea.

Smoke-free playing fields support the process of changing social norms around tobacco use and children by protecting children from smoking role-models. Smoke-free by-laws also support smokers in quit attempts, protect all spectators (adults and children) from the dangers of second-hand smoke and decrease the amount of litter and dangerous waste from cigarette butts which leach toxins and take over fifteen years to degrade. Smoke-free by-laws will provide consistency among community athletic facilities and groups. Most community sporting events are held at either school fields or municipally-owned playing fields. Tobacco is currently prohibited on school property, therefore by-laws restricting use of tobacco on municipal playing fields provide consistent messaging to community members.

There is also scientific support for the implementation of outdoor smoking bans. A study² completed in 2007 at Stanford University found that the presence of outdoor tobacco smoke can be substantial under certain conditions of wind, proximity and number of smokers. Levels of particles outside have reached spikes of indoor particle levels making second-hand smoke in outdoor settings potentially as dangerous as indoor settings. Local public support for the ban of smoking on playing fields is strong. A 2007 telephone survey of over 300 residents of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties age 18 years and older indicates that 75% support smoke-free playing fields.³

Recent implementation in various Ontario municipalities indicates that enforcement is rarely necessary as people tend to self-monitor, therefore there would be little impact on additional enforcement requirements of the City of Belleville. Enforcement of such by-law, if required, would rest with by-law officers and Smoke-free Ontario provincial offenses officers if they were also designated as by-law officers in Belleville for this sole purpose.

There would be no amendments required to by-laws within the City of Belleville. By-law 2007-142 passed July 16, 2007 states:

“Where signs have been erected no person shall smoke or carry a lit cigar, cigarette, pipe or other lit smoking equipment in any park or part thereof designated by signs or markers.”

Thus, implementation of smoke-free playing fields would require only posting of approved no smoking signage and public awareness campaigns and enforcement/education as necessary.

Introducing smoke-free playing fields is a move towards reducing the burden of tobacco-related illness and mortality by removing smoking role-models from children and will have a lasting impact on the health of Belleville citizens and preservation of parks and recreation areas.

BACKGROUND

Smoke-free outdoor spaces have been implemented in other areas throughout Ontario:

- In July 2000 the town of Collingwood passed a by-law to prohibit smoking within 25 m of boundaries of all parks with playground equipment. They followed with smoke-free playing fields by-law in 2005 and have since had no tickets issued and no complaints from the public. From discussion with former council members and public health employees, children from Collingwood who visit various communities for their sporting events have expressed surprise at seeing adults smoking at their games.
- In July 2007, City of Belleville passed a by-law allowing smoke-free signage to be placed in any designated area and immediately created two smoke-free parks with playground equipment.
- In 2008, Woodstock, Ontario implemented a smoking ban 30 metres from playground equipment, 15 metres from the boundary of any recreational field, 9 metres from the entrance to any municipal building, 4 metres from any bus stop as well as a complete ban in outdoor patios and certain community events.

There are approximately 11,000 children under the age of 19 living in Belleville (23% of the population). All children using playing fields, as well as the hundreds of children from visiting teams and spectators would benefit from this protection.

Approximately 27% of adults in Hastings and Prince Edward smoke on a daily and occasional basis.

In a telephone survey³ completed in 2007 to 300 residents of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties age 18 years and older, further support smoke-free spaces is shown as indicated below:

- 81% support smoke-free playgrounds
- 75% support smoke-free playing fields
- 85% support smoke-free entranceways to public places
- 70% support smoke-free patios where food/drink is sold

CONTACT

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¹ Distance recommended by Municipality of Collingwood which implemented smoke-free playgrounds and playing fields in 2002

² Klepeis N.E., Ott W.R., and Switzer P. (2007) “Real-time Measurement of Outdoor Tobacco Smoke Particles,” Journal of the Air and Waste Management Association, 57:522-534.

³ 58% age 50-65+, 78% high school educated or greater, 35% current smokers, 52% smoked at one time in their lives (Provided by Jordan Prosper, HPECHU)