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Thu March 23, 2000
Appears On Page A17
Circulation: 172,000

The Record
Hackensack, NJ

SMOKING

British Columbia's ban in restaurants overturned

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — A ban on smoking in restaurants and bars in British Columbia was declared too broad Wednesday, allowing customers to light up again.

The government-run Workers Compensation Board lacked the authority to expand regulations against exposing workers to secondhand smoke to include bars,

restaurants, and other previously exempted places, ruled Justice Sunni Stromberg-Stein of the provincial Supreme Court.

The ban was imposed at the start of the year. Industry representatives protested that the ban hurt business by driving off smokers. Brenda Locke of the Neighborhood Pub Owners Association of British Columbia estimated more than 700 workers lost their jobs due to decreased business.

The judge's decision means patrons can smoke in bars and restaurants again if the owner allows it, said Dirk Laudan, a lawyer for the public entertainment industry.

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