

# Public Health COMMUNIQUÉ

## Opportunity

### Smoke- and Vape-Free Spaces By-Law

#### Background

The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* and the *Electronic Cigarettes Act* were repealed and replaced by the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* (SFOA); this new law came into effect on October 17, 2018. Electronic cigarettes and lighted cannabis (medical or non-medical) are now included in the SFOA and are prohibited from use anywhere that lighted tobacco is prohibited. In addition, cannabis cannot be smoked, vaped or eaten in a vehicle or boat that is being driven or is at risk of being put into motion.

People may not smoke or vape tobacco or cannabis in the following outdoor areas under the SFOA, 2017:

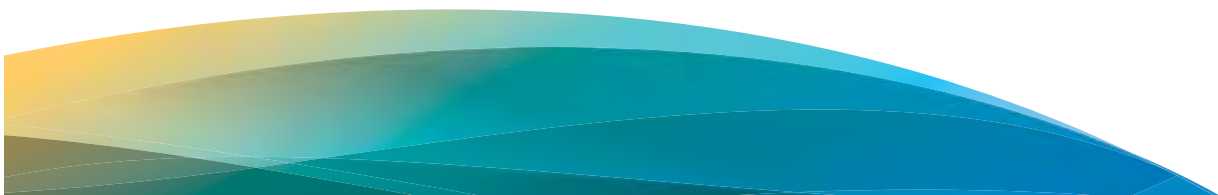
- on restaurant or bar patios and public areas within 9m of a patio
- on outdoor grounds of specified Ontario government office buildings
- in reserved seating areas at outdoor sports and entertainment locations
- on grounds of community recreational facilities, and public areas within 20m of those grounds
- in sheltered outdoor areas with a roof and more than two walls, for use by the public or employees (e.g. a bus shelter)
- on school grounds and all public areas within 20m of these grounds
- on children's playgrounds and public areas within 20m of playgrounds

This new law offers a unique opportunity for municipalities to act to protect community members from the effects of second-hand smoke and vapour more comprehensively, by including cannabis and vaping in their current "No Smoking" By-laws. It is also an opportunity to expand their by-laws to include outdoor areas that are not addressed in the SFOA, such as:

- beaches
- trails (walking, hiking, biking)
- outdoor festivals and events
- municipal property

#### Why consider smoke- and vape-free spaces by-laws?

The vast majority of the population in the Northwestern Health Unit area does not smoke, vape or use cannabis. The current smoking rate is 24%, which is slightly higher than the rest of Ontario (17%) and the current rate of cannabis use is 12%, which the same as Ontario<sup>i</sup>. In the NWHU area, 38% of students in grades 9-12 reported using e-cigarettes in the last month; 21% are current smokers<sup>ii</sup>. Public support for smoke-free outdoor spaces is high among both smoking and non-smoking adults; 89% of adults aged 18 and over support a smoking ban at children's playgrounds and pools<sup>iii</sup>.



### **Smoke- and vape-free spaces offer protection from exposure to second-hand smoke and vapour<sup>iv v vi</sup>**

- There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke;
- Second-hand smoke is particularly harmful to children and those with asthma, allergies and other respiratory conditions;
- Second-hand smoke contains more than 4000 chemicals, with more than 50 known to cause cancer;
- Levels of second-hand smoke in outdoor settings have been measured at rates similar to indoor levels;
- Brief exposures to tobacco smoke may cause adverse health effects in non-smokers;
- There is substantial evidence that the toxic substances emitted from e-cigarettes/vapes are lower than that of combustible tobacco products, but are suspected to cause significant harm.

### **Research on the respiratory effects of smoking cannabis provides the following observations<sup>vi vii</sup>**

- Cannabis smoke contains many of the same chemicals as tobacco smoke;
- Evidence about the link between cannabis smoking and lung cancer is mixed;
- Although, it is still unclear how vaping and second-hand cannabis smoke affect an individual's respiratory system, there is growing evidence that vaping cannabis can cause significant harm.

### **Smoke- and vape-free spaces may help de-normalize smoking which may prevent children and youth from starting to smoke and vape<sup>iv vii</sup>**

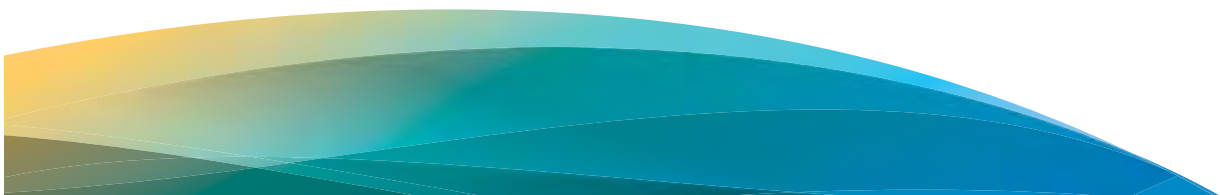
- Youth exposed to tobacco smoke are at a greater risk for starting to smoke compared to adults;
- Youth who have friends and family members who smoke are more likely to be smokers themselves;
- Smoking and vaping restrictions reduce the visibility of smoking or vaping which can impact youth's perception that smoking is unacceptable;
- There is substantial evidence that e-cigarette use increases risk of ever using combustible tobacco cigarettes among youth and young adults.

### **Smoke- and vape-free spaces can prevent litter and pollution caused by discarded cigarette butts<sup>viii</sup>**

- Cigarette butts are the most common form of litter in the world;
- Filters are not biodegradable and can pose a threat to the environment;
- Improper disposal of cigarette butts can lead to fire;
- Cigarette butts are toxic and can cause adverse health effects in children and wildlife if ingested.

### **Smoke- and vape-free spaces support attempts to quit smoking and those who have recently quit<sup>viii</sup>**

- Quit attempts can be inspired by smoke- and vape-free laws and by-laws;
- Reduced visibility of smoking and vaping supports those who are trying to quit by reducing cues;
- Relapse can occur when a former user sees someone smoking/vaping or from smelling smoke/vapour.



## How can the Northwestern Health Unit support a smoke- and vape-free spaces by-law?

Staff would be pleased to work with your municipality to prepare and pass a by-law, and we can offer the following:

- Support for the development of the by-law (research of other by-laws, wording);
- Education and awareness of the by-law (media releases, sharing of information);
- Cessation efforts of community members (resources, supports, referrals).

Resources (Links)	For more info contact
<a href="#">Government of Ontario: Smoke-Free Ontario - The Next Chapter April, 2018</a>	Christine McLeod, Health Promoter (807) 223-3301 ext. 302533 <a href="mailto:cmcleod@nwhu.on.ca">cmcleod@nwhu.on.ca</a>
<a href="#">NASEM: Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes, January 2018</a>	
<a href="#">CCSUA: Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis: Respiratory Effects of Cannabis Smoking, 2016</a>	Nancy Koval, Tobacco Enforcement Officer (807) 468-3147 ext. 301230 <a href="mailto:nkoval@nwhu.on.ca">nkoval@nwhu.on.ca</a>

## References

<sup>i</sup>Canadian Community Health Survey, 2015/2016

<sup>ii</sup>COMPASS, 2018/2019

<sup>iii</sup>Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Monitor (Full Year), 2013

<sup>iv</sup>[Government of Ontario: Smoke-Free Ontario - The Next Chapter April, 2018](#)

<sup>v</sup>[NASEM: Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes, January 2018](#)

<sup>vi</sup>[Health Canada Safety Alert](#)

<sup>vii</sup>[CCSUA: Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis: Respiratory Effects of Cannabis Smoking, 2016](#)

<sup>viii</sup>Smoke-Free Beaches in Ontario: Progress and Implications for Practice, November 2011

