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ash.ca is a bimonthly newsletter of *Action on Smoking & Health*. ASH is Western Canada's leading health organization devoted to tobacco control and prevention. If you would like to become a member or need more information please visit our website www.ash.ca or contact our office at the address below.

➤ **ATRA calls for provincial tobacco legislation**

The Alberta Tobacco Reduction Alliance is urging the Alberta government to introduce comprehensive tobacco legislation in Alberta. The ATRA proposal calls for:

- Smoking bans in workplaces and in public areas accessible to children
- Legislation to restrict tobacco marketing and promotion
- Increased funding for tobacco reduction
- Provincial tobacco tax increases
- Support for smokers who want to quit

ATRA developed the recommendations after conducting an extensive consultation with the public, its members, and policy experts across Canada. The recommendations are consistent with the available evidence on the health impact of various tobacco control strategies around the world.

ATRA formally presented the recommendations to the Alberta Government's Standing Policy Committee on Health and Safe Communities in February. A decision regarding the recommendations is now pending.

To date, more than 280 Alberta organizations have endorsed the ATRA policy recommendations including all 17 regional health authorities.

ASH was a founding member of the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Alliance – a provincial coalition of 85 organizations devoted to tobacco use reduction.

For more information, visit the ATRA website at www.atra.ab.ca

> Lethbridge smoking ban well accepted

Despite the furor over recent smoking bans in British Columbia, a restaurant smoking ban in Lethbridge has gone largely unnoticed. On January 1, Lethbridge restaurants went smoke-free as the result of smoking bylaw amendments approved in 1997. The ban has been well accepted by local restaurants and patrons with no charges or convictions recorded to date.

The Lethbridge bylaw requires all indoor public areas accessible to children

to be completely smoke-free, including restaurants. The bylaw contains an escape clause that allows restaurants to choose between allowing smoking or allowing children. However less than 5 percent of restaurants have chosen to use this option and have simply decided to ban smoking in their premises.

The Chinook Health Region and the Lethbridge Campaign for Smoke-Free Restaurants were largely responsible for achieving this important Alberta precedent.

Dr. Paul Hasselback, Medical Officer of Health for the Chinook Health Region, and Barry Marquardson, the leader of the Lethbridge campaign, are to be congratulated for their tireless efforts in securing the bylaw.

Since the Lethbridge bylaw was passed in 1997, Pincher Creek and Taber have also passed bylaws to ban smoking in restaurants and other indoor public areas.

> Senator Kenny just keeps going and going...

After a failed attempt to force tobacco companies to finance a national tobacco reduction foundation in 1998, Liberal Senator Colin Kenny simply refuses to give up. Senator Kenny has introduced a reinvented bill titled the *Tobacco Youth Protection Act* (Bill S-20) that would require tobacco companies to set aside a \$1.50/carton levy to finance a \$360 million tobacco use prevention fund. Operating at arms-length to government, the fund would finance an unprecedented national tobacco prevention strategy that is modeled after the successful experiences of several U.S. jurisdictions.

Bill S-20 has the potential to transform Canada's current tobacco reduction effort

by providing adequate funding for an effective, evidence-based national strategy. The \$1.50 per carton levy would place Canada's per-capita funding on par with that of California and Massachusetts. Smoking rates in these two states are declining at more than twice the U.S. national average as the result of a meaningful investment in a variety of successful tobacco reduction strategies. These strategies include high-profile mass media campaigns, school and community-based prevention programs, legislation and enforcement, and effective smoking cessation programs.

Senator Kenny has been touring the country building support for his bill, including

several stops in Alberta. This hard-working Ontario Senator is not to be underestimated in his determination to pressure his government colleagues to make a meaningful investment in tobacco use prevention.

Bill S-20 is scheduled for debate in the Senate this spring. If approved, the bill will be introduced and debated in the House of Commons later this year.

Please see the Action Alert for details on how you can support Bill S-20.

➤ Edmonton City Council ponders restaurant smoking ban

Long-time tobacco reduction supporter, Councillor Allan Bolstad, is urging his fellow Edmonton city councillors to consider a smoking ban in workplaces, restaurants, and all indoor public areas accessible to children. Councillor Bolstad's motion to revisit the Edmonton smoking bylaw was approved by the Community Services Committee on April 17. City administration has been instructed to draft a bylaw for Council's consideration and to hold public hearings over the summer.

To date, three Alberta municipalities-Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, and Taber-have passed bylaws to ban smoking in restaurants and other indoor public areas accessible to children. Over 50 municipalities in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario have passed bylaws to prohibit smoking in restaurants and other public areas.

➤ Breast cancer linked to passive smoking

Alarming new research from Health Canada suggests exposure to secondhand smoke may increase the risk of breast cancer, and the longer the exposure, the higher the risk. The study was conducted by researchers at Health Canada's Laboratory Centre for Disease Control and the results were published in the scientific journal *Cancer Causes and Control*.

Researchers found the risk of breast cancer in premenopausal women increased by 100 per cent if they were exposed to second-hand smoke for a long period of time – around 20 years. The study has major implications for the prevention of breast cancer and for those working in tobacco control.

Some epidemiologists say tobacco exposure may explain the unnerving rise in breast cancer rates over the past 30 years, as more women entered workplaces where smoking was permitted. In 1969, 78 new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed per 100,000 women; last year, it reached 110 new cases, or about 19,000 women.

➤ ASH Group Insurance a resounding success

Since its launch in March 1998, ASH Group Insurance has provided hundreds of ASH members with lower rates on their home and auto insurance. The first insurance program of its kind in Canada, ASH Group Insurance represents a successful partnership between ASH, our broker – Willis Canada, and our carrier – Allianz/Trafalgar (formerly Canada West).

The program was initiated on the basis of several published reports showing that nonsmokers are safer drivers and have fewer house fires. A report prepared by the U.S. National Center for Injury Prevention in 1994 found that smokers were 50 percent more likely to have car accidents and that careless smoking is a leading cause of home fires. This report

and other studies convinced the insurance broker, Willis Canada, and the insurance carrier, Allianz/Trafalgar, to develop this program.

To qualify for the program, the individual must meet the following criteria:

- Be a dues-paid member of ASH
- Be a nonsmoker for at least one year
- Must not allow any smoking in their home
- Meet certain underwriting requirements

For more information or to obtain an insurance quotation, contact Willis Canada toll-free at 1-800-272-5688 or in the Edmonton area call 428-6431.

➤ Action Alert: Bill S-20

Senator Colin Kenny needs your help to ensure the speedy passage of Bill S-20, the *Tobacco Youth Protection Act* in the Senate. As of the date of this publication, Bill S-20 cleared an important hurdle by receiving *second reading* or approval in principle in the Upper House.

However the passage of the bill is not guaranteed and it awaits further debate prior to its final passage in the Senate.

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, Bill S-20 has the potential to transform Canada's current tobacco reduction effort by providing adequate funding for an effective, evidence-based strategy. The \$1.50 per carton levy will place Canada's per-capita funding on par with that of California and Massachusetts.

You can help ensure the speedy passage of this important bill by sending a letter of support to the following Alberta Senators:

- Senator Thelma Chalifoux
- Senator Joyce Fairbairn
- Senator Ronald D. Ghitler
- Senator Daniel Hays
- Senator Douglas Roche
- Senator Nick Taylor
- Senator Tommy Banks

Address: The Senate of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4 No postage is required.

In your letter, please relay any of your personal experiences with respect to tobacco use and emphasize the need to keep kids tobacco-free. Be sure to ask for the Senators support for Bill S-20, the *Tobacco Youth Prevention Act* and request a written response to your letter.

For more details on Bill S-20, please visit Senator Kenny and his dog, Harry, at www.sen.parl.gc.ca/ckenny

➤ B.C. smoking ban stalled

The B.C. Supreme Court has reversed a province-wide smoking ban in restaurants and bars that took effect on January 1. In a 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that the Workers' Compensation Board did not conduct sufficient consultation with the hospitality industry during the development of new B.C. smoking regulations. Despite the reversal, smoking bans remain in effect in the vast majority of workplaces throughout the province.

The Workers Compensation Board will be conducting a new round of consultations over the summer to help determine its next course of action. Local smoking bans in the lower mainland and in greater Victoria remain in effect despite the ruling.

➤ A new look and a new name

ASH is proud to announce the launch of our new bi-monthly newsletter, *ash.ca*. This newsletter is intended to keep our members and supporters "in the loop" on major tobacco control issues. In *ash.ca* we will be providing a brief synopsis of news and current affairs that are relevant to our readers. Our newsletter is named after our website for the purpose of cross-promoting our easily remembered Internet location (www.ash.ca). We invite your feedback on our inaugural edition and we encourage you to visit our website regularly to keep up to date on ASH's latest developments. If you would prefer to receive *ash.ca* by email, please send us a message at info@ash.ca and we can save a few trees. **Enjoy!**