

ASH NEWS RELEASE

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FIVE MUNICIPALITIES VOTING ON SMOKE -FREE RESTAURANT BYLAWS

During Monday's municipal general election, five Alberta municipalities are holding plebiscites to determine if smoking will be banned in local restaurants. Voters in Brooks, Olds, Three Hills, Cold Lake and Grande Prairie have an opportunity to determine the fate of smoking in all public areas accessible to children. Only two similar plebiscites have been held in past elections and both were successful.

"The number of smoking bylaw plebiscites demonstrates that many Albertans are deeply concerned about this issue" said Cynthia Smith, ASH vice-president. "Over the past three years, smoking bylaws have replaced video lottery terminals as a top civic issue" she added. "We are very pleased with the increasing public support for smoke-free environments and we are very optimistic about the outcome on Monday night".

In the past few months, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Coaldale, Canmore, and Athabasca have passed smoke-free restaurant bylaws resulting in a total of 13 such bylaws across Alberta. Almost one million Albertans are now protected from secondhand smoke in public establishments accessible to children. A positive outcome on Monday will increase the number of smoke-free bylaws by 30 percent.

"Monday's vote is a pivotal moment for the tobacco reduction movement in Alberta" said Les Hagen, executive director. "A positive outcome will send a clear message to the Alberta government that voters across the province want protection from secondhand smoke" Hagen added. "A patchwork of local bylaws is not the answer—uniform provincial standards are required."

The Alberta government is presently considering a comprehensive tobacco reduction strategy that must include provincial smoking regulations if it is to be effective. A decision is anxiously anticipated.

ASH is Western Canada's leading tobacco control organization devoted solely to tobacco control and prevention.

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