

Dedicated to making the Tobacco Industry a health hazard of the past.



Breathers' Digest

News from the Front Lines

Spring 2007

Airspace Action on Smoking & Health

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According to Health Canada, more than 45,000 Canadians will die this year due to smoking. Of those, more than 300 non-smokers will die of lung cancer & at least 700 non-smokers will die of coronary heart disease caused by exposure to second-hand smoke.

"THERE IS NO RATIONAL, MORAL OR ECONOMIC ARGUMENT FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE MANUFACTURE, SALE OR USE OF SMOKING TOBACCO."

- ROBERT STARKEY,
SMOKEFREEREVOLUTION.ORG
03/18/2007

Congratulations to Garfield Mahood, O.C.

Gar Mahood of the Non-Smokers' Rights Association was named to the Order of Canada in February.

ENDGAME: TOBACCO

Until very recently, we've always described what we do - and what every other anti-tobacco group does - as "tobacco control." Whether it was lobbying for No Smoking bylaws or ordinances or lobbying for the minimum age for the purchase of tobacco to be raised, or protesting in front of tobacco company offices, in front of courts where various and sundry tobacco cases were being heard, on the front steps of the provincial legislature or in front of the Supreme Court of Canada (when that court struck down significant sections of the Tobacco Products Control Act many years ago) or writing letters to the editor; it was all part of "tobacco control."

Maybe we're just getting too old and too tired of fighting this war; a war that we are clearly winning, one battle at a time, and a war that, we're convinced, we will win, once and for all, one day.

While discussing my tobacco control efforts with many people over the years, I have very confidently told them that, despite all the progress we've made over the last few decades, I'll be fighting this war 'til the day I die, and that I don't seriously expect the industry to be out of business in my lifetime, and then I merrily carried on working on one "tobacco control" project or another.

But a light went on recently, and the word "endgame" popped into my head. Obviously, it's not a word you hear in everyday conversation and, quite frankly, while I had some sense of what it meant, I wasn't real clear on the exact definition, so I looked it up. It seems it's most commonly used in the context of a chess game; the final stage of a game, the late or final stages of any activity, the final stage of a course of events or an extended process of negotiation; the diplomatic endgame, etc.

There is no reason whatsoever why "endgame" cannot apply to tobacco in the exact same way it applies to chess and "extended diplomatic negotiations", etc.

Airspace Action on Smoking and Health sent out a press release on February 12, calling for the total eradication of the tobacco industry. Here's an excerpt: "If we can effectively eliminate the illegal, under-aged cigarette/tobacco market, globally, the cartel will be out of business in very short order. And ultimately, over subsequent years/decades, that will result in many positive outcomes, including (but definitely not limited to) the elimination of:

- one of the biggest drains on our "in-crisis" public health-care system;
- the leading cause of fatal house fires, as well as a leading cause of fatal and environmentally devastating forest fires;
- smoking in virtually every place where other people (especially children) are present, including all indoor public places, workplaces, multi-unit dwellings (apartments, condos, etc.), homes, cars, beaches, parks, sidewalks, etc.;
- the leading form of litter.

"The 'pros' of eradicating the nicotine cartel from the face of the planet far outweigh any perceived 'cons'."

Within a day or two of sending out the press release, Errol received an e-mail from an anti-tobacco activist in India, Hemant Goswami. He mentioned the "eradication" of the tobacco industry as well, but via government grants to buy out tobacco farmers and/or help them switch to alternative crops. (See "Canadian tobacco farmers offer surrender terms" on page 2.)

There are likely many other ways to achieve **ENDGAME: TOBACCO**. In fact, each and every successful "tobacco control" measure brings us one small step closer to it. Please join us!

B.C. hurries to catch up with the leaders

The BC government has finally realized that you cannot solve the health care crisis or claim the title of "national leader in health" without doing something effective to curb the chief sources of preventable illness.

Kudos to Health Minister George Abbott for bringing in this highly necessary legislation so long resisted by our Premier, Gordon Campbell.

But don't break out the champagne yet. First of all, the Liberals have a long history of close association with the tobacco industry. The legislation is promised to come into effect "sometime" in 2008. The government has also said that there will be a "reasonable period" to adjust (why can they not adjust in the time it takes for the legislation to take effect?), during which time there will be no actual enforcement.

Furthermore, although power walls will be prohibited, health care facilities such as pharmacies will be able to continue to breach their own ethical guidelines by continuing to sell the number one preventable cause of disease and premature death while pretending to care or be knowledgeable about their customers' health.

The new legislation will also ban all indoor smoking and outdoor smoking "near" windows, doors, and air intake vents. How near "near" will be remains to be seen, as well as whether it will also apply to public transit stops, line-ups,

crowded outdoor venues, and/or restaurant patios.

Definite strong points of the legislation will be the unambiguous banning of all smoking from hospital and school properties.

Nevertheless, until we see how long the provincial Liberals delay this legislation, how effectively they enforce it once implemented, and how near "near" is when referring to outdoor smoking buffer zones, breaking out the champagne is premature.

Still, there is no doubt that this proposed legislation is a huge step toward catching up with the more progressive provinces and territories.

If we actually wanted to return to being the leaders, we would have to implement the law within this year, ensure that "near" means something effective when referring to smoking buffer zones, that health care providers are not permitted to sell death and disease, and that the legislation is enforced from the date that it takes effect.

If we could in addition make it easier to create and enforce smoke-free multi-unit housing, then we would truly distance ourselves from the pack and call ourselves "leaders".

- Sera Kirk

Canadian tobacco farmers offer surrender terms

An organization called "Tobacco Farmers in Crisis" staged a protest in Delhi, Ontario in late February. This particular group of protesters was asking for a government handout, but this time, there was a twist. They weren't asking for crop subsidies, price supports, marketing help, or restrictions on imports. Instead, they want the Federal government to put in a slight increase in the Federal tax on cigarettes, and use the revenue to finance the conversion of tobacco farms to other crops. What they are advocating is similar to a program adopted in the U.S. three years ago.

This offer of surrender terms was prompted by the reality that the quotas mandated by the marketing board for tobacco are only 20% of what they were ten years ago, and these quotas might be even lower this year. This doesn't, of course, mean that the sale of cigarettes in Canada has dropped by 80%. It means that the three principal distributors of cigarettes in Canada (this is worded to include BAT [as in Player's and du Maurier], which has its corporate offices in London, UK, and now manufactures cigarettes for the Canadian market in Mexico) are purchasing most of their raw tobacco from third-world countries, primarily Brazil.

Now, we could be uncharitable and point out that these same people were complaining ten years ago that cigarette taxes were too high, and that five years ago, they were asking the government for marketing help. That would be a bad idea. The current Conservative government could, for ideological reasons, respond by abolishing the marketing board. This would bankrupt most tobacco growers, but it would keep a few big ones in business, and they would still have some clout in Ottawa.

The "exit strategy" advocated by Tobacco Farmers in Crisis would be better for just about everyone. Airspace wants the tobacco industry removed from this planet, and this would be a step in that direction. The distributors of cigarettes in Canada would no longer be able to hold these tobacco growers hostage, and the absence of any Canadian content in their product will make these corporations even more unpopular.

The "anything that's good for business" Canadian Taxpayers Federation is opposed to a buyout. Their proposal is to reduce taxes on cigarettes, so that the tobacco industry can sell more cigarettes, and buy more tobacco from Canadian farmers.

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis deserves some credit for being realistic about the tobacco industry's future. Their activities have gotten little attention from the mainstream media. What they are doing deserves to be taken seriously. *—Bob Broughton*

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis site: <http://www.tobaccofarmersincrisis.org/>

Book review: *My Addiction to Smoking*

Roger Perron never had a chance not to be a smoker. Surrounded by smoking in both his home and his community, and handed his first cigarette at the age of 11 or 12, along with instructions on how to "smoke like a man", there was little chance that he would ever escape addiction. Not that his community had a chance either; until recently, the tobacco industry enjoyed carte blanche in promoting addiction, disease, and death as freedom, individuality, and harmless fun. Even in 2007, it is still fighting in the highest court in Canada to restore what it sees as its right to profit from those it can con into paying it to use its deadly and disabling products. In the end, it was Roger, and not the people who made him an addict, who paid the heftiest price.

Roger's first book, "My Addiction to Smoking", is an overview of his life that includes details about the impact of Buerger's Disease, also known as "Smoker's Leg", a circulatory ailment (see <http://vasculitis.med.jhu.edu/typesof/buergers.html>). So severe was his addiction, that even after losing both his legs to the excruciating disease and being told that he would likely lose more limbs if he did not stop smoking, it took another five to six months and the help of an acupuncturist for him to actually stop and bring the progressive disease into remission.

The tobacco industry's wrongly perceived "right to profit" cost Roger an even bigger price: his beloved son, Clinton. A single cigarette on a camping trip by a lake triggered an epileptic seizure that caused the boy to fall into the water and drown. Still, Roger maintains a surprisingly positive attitude. A likeable, easy-going guy in person, he has a sense of humour and is very open to talking about his struggles. He is even eager: by telling his story, he hopes to spare others similar suffering. Mixed with the pathos of the events that devastated his life are anecdotes of events that could not have been funny at the time, but are told with humour, such as losing both artificial legs when he slipped on ice or accidentally melted his artificial legs by standing too close to a camp fire. There is even mention of Airspace's current President in the role of his alter ego, the Grim Reaper.

Roger is currently working on the second, more detailed version of his book, which he hopes to have published by the end of the year.

-Sera Kirk

My Addiction to Smoking is available from amazon.ca.

Global Climate Change and the Tobacco Industry

A lot of the global tobacco supply now comes from Brazil, partially due to political instability in Zimbabwe. This means destruction of rain forest.

We've known about this for a while. A more sinister connection turned up last year, in a ground-breaking article in *Vanity Fair* magazine, "While Washington Slept", by Mark Hertsgaard. (See <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2006/05/warming200605>.) Hertsgaard told the story of Dr. Frederick Seitz and other spokesmen paid by ExxonMobil to say that "the science behind global warming is inconclusive." ExxonMobil also gave \$30,000 to Steven Milloy, who runs a web site about "junk science". Milloy is credited with inventing this term, and he refers to environmentalists as Nazis, Communists, and terrorists.

Seitz and Milloy have a history of professional lying that predates the public debate about global climate change. Seitz helped R.J. Reynolds hand out money to tobacco-industry-friendly researchers during the 1970s and 1980s, and he was paid \$585,000 for doing this. Milloy was employed by APCO, a public relations firm hired by Philip Morris to discredit the US EPA report "Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking", published in late 1992.

Philip Morris now publicly admits that second-hand indoor tobacco smoke is a health hazard. According to internal PM documents, they knew that the EPA report was a real problem for them. In February 1993, Ellen Merlo, PM's Senior Vice-President of Corporate Affairs, sent a letter to William I. Campbell, PM's CEO at the time, which contained this sentiment: "Our overriding objective is to discredit the EPA report ... Concurrently, it is our objective to prevent states and cities, as well as businesses, from passive-smoking bans."

The efforts of PM and RJR in this area can be characterized as a major failure, but they can be blamed for delaying restrictions on indoor smoking by several years, and there are still plenty of places on this planet where people are involuntarily exposed to second-hand smoke. That Seitz, Milloy, and their ilk are now paid by ExxonMobil instead of the tobacco industry should not be a cause for celebration, and it's worth going to the trouble of informing people of their total lack of credibility.

-Bob Broughton

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Smoking issues in multi-unit housing

Within the next two years it will be possible to avoid secondhand smoke in nearly all indoor spaces in British Columbia and even in some outdoor spaces. The last place in which we remain without meaningful protection will be our own homes, especially for those living in multi-unit housing (apartments, condos, etc.).

In densely populated areas such as Greater Vancouver, where there is already a critical shortage of decent, affordable housing, the lack of smoke-free options makes finding a suitable home even more difficult.

The first project to address this in BC was the appropriately-named Envy condominium project located in the Lower Lonsdale area of North Vancouver, developed by Wedgewood Marcon Homes Ltd. The "green theme" of the project included making the entire property, indoors as well as outside on balconies and patios, smoke-free. While the suites, which average a size of 746 square feet and selling for \$350,000 to \$650,000 hardly fall into the category of "affordable" for most people, the response was overwhelmingly popular and nearly all 50 units sold within the first day. For more information, go to envynorthvan.com or telephone (604) 983-3689. Occupancy is projected for February 2008.

The most common obstacle to making a building smoke-free is the myth that it is illegal to do so. It is no more illegal than requiring residents to keep the noise level reasonable or prohibiting pets and the benefits are myriad.

Cleaning and maintenance costs plummet and the health, comfort, and satisfaction level of other residents skyrockets. Thirty percent of residential fires are caused by negligent smoking; that risk is completely eliminated when smoking is prohibited. Furthermore, the vast majority of criminals, people with aggressive tendencies, and party animals who create other types of disturbances smoke and/or associate with smokers. These are people who will go somewhere other than your building to live, leaving you to enjoy your home or manage your property in peace.

Those wishing to make their property smoke-free may protect themselves against taking on new smokers:

1. Include specific language in all new residential agreements prohibiting smoking both indoors and outdoors, anywhere on the property, including common as well as private areas;
2. Ensure that all advertising for the unit specifies that the building is non-smoking;
3. While existing smokers cannot be forced to leave specifically for smoking, creating a nuisance/health/safety hazard and depriving other residents of quiet enjoyment of their homes can and should be dealt with; and
4. Where structural changes need to be made to protect other residents who are bothered by the smoke, such changes should be made to the suite of the smoker and, in owner-occupied suites, at the expense of the person creating the disturbance (the smoker).

To ensure that your rights as a resident are protected, be aware that many housing providers promise smoke-free housing, but do not enforce it. While the following suggestions will not guarantee that you are moving into a smoke-free home, they do ensure that you will have legal recourse if you are forced to move because the housing provider has misrepresented the smoking environment:

1. Before you even look at a unit, ask the provider what provisions exist for protection against secondhand smoke from neighbours and, if they are not to your satisfaction, advise the housing provider why you will not be pursuing that suite;
2. Insist on clear and specific language prohibiting indoor and outdoor smoking in any agreement that you sign;
3. Pay attention to signs of smoking, such as ashtrays, cigarette butts, and how the place smells;
4. Bring a witness with you to view the property;
5. If there are heavy odour-masking measures, ask what odours are being concealed; and
6. Ask specifically whether there are any smokers in the building, in which suites they live (to ensure that existing smoker residents are not located in suites from which they will likely ruin your right to quiet enjoyment), and whether the smoking provisions you have requested are in your neighbours' agreements as well.

-Sera Kirk

Social instability in China?

In a March 7 discussion in China on restricting smoking in public places, Zhang Baozhen, Vice Director of China's National Tobacco Monopoly Administration, protested such restrictions by insisting "not having tobacco can affect social stability" and "smokers rioted when the former Soviet Union collapsed because they could not get any cigarettes."

His statements precipitated a fury of reaction in the Chinese press, with most noting Zhang's comments have more to do with self-interest than with social order, and with others noting that smoking bans in North America and Europe have been greeted as something long overdue and without the masses going postal.

An online survey in China following Zhang's comments found almost 80% of respondents support smoking bans, indicating Chinese are now waking up to the fact that the companies Zhang represents slaughter over 3,000 Chinese citizens every day, more than in 1989's Tiananmen Square Massacre.

If this level of daily massacres is what Zhang feels is acceptable for "social stability," it would appear his opinion is becoming increasingly isolated.

-Marc Ander