

Proposal: Smoking Cessation and Prevention and Limiting Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Purpose: To limit student exposure to secondhand smoke, and to provide an environment and package of programs that will help students who are smokers to quit.

1. Legal Premise

According to the Tobacco Act of Quebec [1], smoking is prohibited within a nine-meter radius of the doors of public institutions, including universities

According to the CDC, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and according to the McGill Charter of Student Rights section 4.2.7 “The University has an obligation to maintain safe and suitable conditions of learning and study.” Forcing students to walk through a cloud of carcinogenic smoke to access study space clearly does not satisfy 4.2.7.

As such, if it does not act to counter exposure to secondhand smoke exposure, the University is negligent in the application of a Provincial law and in the application of its own charter and therefore must take action.

2. Reducing Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Both the University of Melbourne and the MUHC have attempted to reduce secondhand smoke by building smoking shelters. In the case of the University of Melbourne this was part of a transition to a smokefree campus. Dr. Gilman, director of the MUHC’s Smoking Cessation Program, has said that the MUHC shelter seems to be effective. While a smokefree campus should be the long-term objective and has been achieved by many other institutions, we recommend the following as temporizing measures as the implications of a smokefree campus are considered:

- a. Enforcement by McGill Security and McGill staff of the 9 meter smoke-free radius around entrances to University buildings
- b. The construction of smoking shelters near areas with traditionally high proportions of student smokers for use in the winter. As a pilot project, we recommend constructing a shelter in front of doors to the McLennan Library, near the winged statue. We recommend a three-sided structure with the side overlooking Lower Field open to provide ventilation. The shelter should also have a roof in order to entice students not to smoke in the underpass below the connection to Redpath. It should be equipped with ashtrays. Finally, we recommend it be a temporary structure to be replaced by a painted line in the summer. Should this pilot be successful, we would look at other appropriate places to place the shelters. We will be applying to the Gardens and Grounds Committee for funding for this project.
- c. We recommend that ashtrays be placed nine meters away from all building entrances with a high volume of smokers in order to demarcate the legal smoking distance. These should be placed so as to avoid intersection with high foot-traffic areas.

- d. We also recommend that Healthy McGill work on a harm-reduction publicity and information campaign about reducing secondhand smoke exposure. We suggest that this campaign have two major messages: that non-smokers should protect themselves from secondhand smoke, and that smokers should be considerate when around non-smokers.

3. Education and Prevention

Given that the Student Health Service (SHS) website currently has no smoking information, we would work with the incoming SHS director to upload a page on smoking facts and smoking cessation

We would also work with Healthy McGill to run a campaign informing students about the dangers of smoking. We would have two main education themes: Prevention and Cessation

Prevention would focus on addressing the reasons students begin smoking (such as stress, weight loss, and exposure to smoking peers). We would focus on positive messaging, such as alternative stress coping or mechanisms or healthy eating and exercise. Anti-fat-shaming messages would also be useful here.

Cessation would focus on letting students know what cessation options exist (nicotine replacement, medication, counselling) and how to access them. This should be done in conjunction with Student Health, Counselling, and the MUHC's Smoking Cessation Program. Messaging about helping friends quit and about the dangers of 'casual' smoking (smoking a few cigarettes a day) would be useful as well.

4. Cessation

We propose working with Student Health Services and Counselling to offer medication and counseling for smoking cessation.

We propose working with the MUHC Smoking Cessation program to handle referrals and overflow from SHS and Counselling

We will also work with the SSMU VP FOPS to add smoking cessation counselling to the ASEQ Student Health Plan, and will lobby the Blue Cross program to reimburse health professionals for smoking cessation counselling.

With these three avenues- secondhand smoke exposure reduction, education, and smoking cessation, we hope to reduce the impact of smoking on the health of our students and encourage more students to quit. A smoke-free campus is an ideal solution, but requires further study before it can be implemented, and this proposal acts as a useful temporizing measure.

References:

http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/T_0_01/T_0_01_A.html

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/general_facts/