

# Smoking on Campus: A Townhall

*Senate Caucus Ad-Hoc  
Working Group*



# Format

- Short presentation, followed by discussion

# Disclaimer

- No funding received
- Several students on the working group are in health professional programs and have a professional mandate to reduce exposure to smoking
- One of our working group members is a social smoker
- No other disclaimers or conflicts of interests

# Smoking- Our View

- Smoking is harmful and addictive; people may 'choose' (and this is a problematic word) to start smoking but stopping is extremely difficult
- Approaching smoking means approaching something that, for many people, is tied to mental health, anxiety, stress-coping, and we have to respect that
- Smokers have the right to be treated with respect like everyone else
- What is in question, though, is the right to smoke everywhere

# Smoking @ McGill: Stats

- According to the recent NCHA-McGill survey (n= 354 students, response rate 10% of 4000 students contacted) 2.5% of McGill students smoked in the last 30 days (but this number has been called into question; national average is 11.6%)
- That's still **815** students (much more if we count use > 30 days ago)

# Smoking @ McGill: Stats

- 13.9% reported getting info about smoking from McGill (24.7% national average)
- Bottom line
  - We aren't sure exactly how many students smoke but likely >/- 815
  - We don't provide as much smoking education as other universities

# Smoking @ McGill: Why talk about this now?

- Students complain about places like the “Redpath Tunnel” → 2<sup>nd</sup> hand smoke
- Redpath ‘smoke free terrace’ is not smoke free
- Other areas with lots of 2<sup>nd</sup> hand smoke (Bronfmann, Law Library, SSMU)
- This prompted formation of our working group (after a Councillor asked us about it)
- We met and worked on a proposal
- Then we ran a survey based on our ideas

# The Proposal

- Education
  - Working with partners like Healthy McGill
  - Address stress, social smoking, weight-loss, university-specific causes
  - Offer alternative lifestyle choices
  - Take a harm-reduction/second-hand smoke reducing approach
  - Also make sure people know about quitting resources and methods



# The Proposal

- Cessation and harm reduction resources
  - Work with Mental Health, Student Health, Counselling, Healthy McGill, MUHC
  - Provide an array of services, from NRT/meds to group counselling to peer support
  - Final details being worked out, but plan is to have something for everyone (i.e people who want to quit, people who want to cut down, alternate stress management strategies etc...)
  - All this should be handled by existing services, but we are also looking into off-campus insurance for counselling (meds are covered by SSMU plan)

# The Proposal

- Smoking shelters
  - Idea is to create a place to smoke that is out of the cold and wind but that reduces 2<sup>nd</sup> hand smoke exposure for others
  - Used in Melbourne, the MUHC to transition to smoke-free campus
  - Could be turned into bike shelters once campus is smoke free/in summer
  - Also will have ashtrays to deal with butts
  - University is looking into cost; we should have funds from Grounds & Gardens

# Smoking Shelters



# Locations?



# Fate?

- Are they a good permanent solution?
- Do we keep them as smoking shelters forever? Transition to bike shelters?
- All year round or just during the winter?
- Need to keep in mind several factors (aesthetics, etc...)

# The Proposal

- Smoke-free campus?
  - Done at Dalhousie (Also a winter campus with similar smoking rates to Montreal), over 1000 US institutions
  - Has been shown to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke *and* intention to smoke
  - Both contrary to and in line with harm reduction (i.e encouraging cessation vs. encouraging people to cut down and also decreasing second hand smoke)
  - Obviously controversial, but apparently effective

# Enforcement?

- Security: no cash, no will
  - But may be able to help at the outset
- New model: Peer-led culture change
  - Students educating students

# In times of uncertainty...

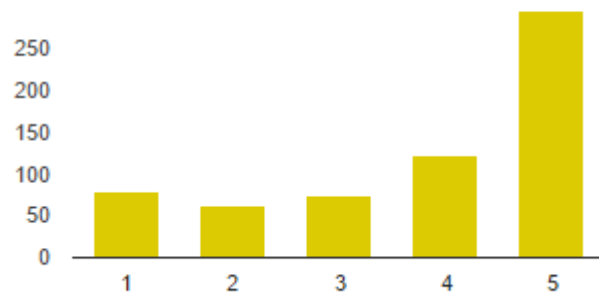
- We ran a survey!
- OVER 600 (!) responses
- Survey did not ask if respondents were smokers, to avoid discrimination (i.e people deleting smoker's answers)
- Survey was open over roughly 2.5 weeks, distributed through listservs and student councillors



# Survey results

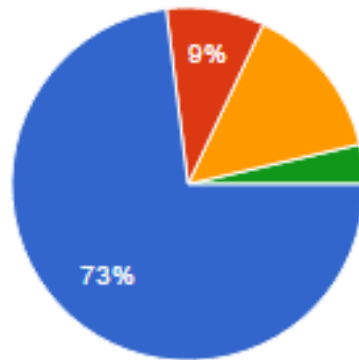
- Respondents: 634 (one neutral test value)
- Faculties/Schools:
  - Education: 9
  - Dentistry: 13
  - Medicine/Med-P: 78
  - Arts&Science: 21
  - Science: 113
  - Arts: 112
  - Nursing: 60
  - Engineering:159
  - Management: 11
  - Law: 47
  - Agriculture and Env: 5
  - Other: 15

### Do you feel second hand smoke is a problem on campus?



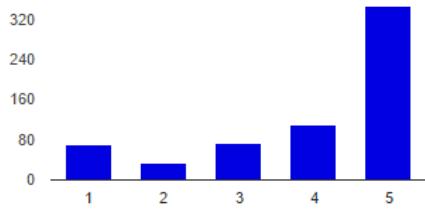
Not at all: 1	80	12.6%
2	63	9.9%
3	74	11.7%
4	123	19.4%
Very much so : 5	294	46.4%

### Do you feel the university should enforce its current smoking policies?



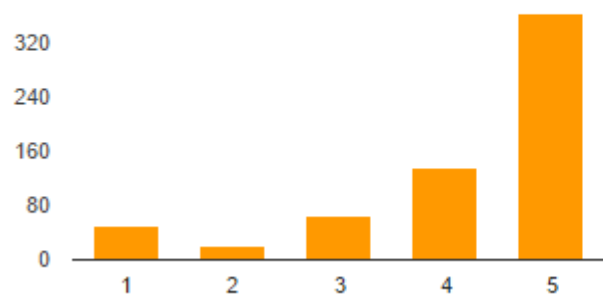
Yes	463	73%
No	57	9%
Not sure	91	14.4%
Other	23	3.6%

Would you support an education campaign aimed at exploring the risks of smoking, specifically of smoking in a university context, and the available cessation methods?



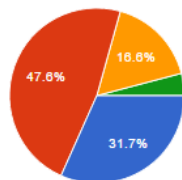
I do not support :	1	69	10.9%
	2	34	5.4%
	3	74	11.7%
	4	111	17.5%
I strongly support :	5	346	54.6%

### Would you support increased availability of smoking cessation resources?



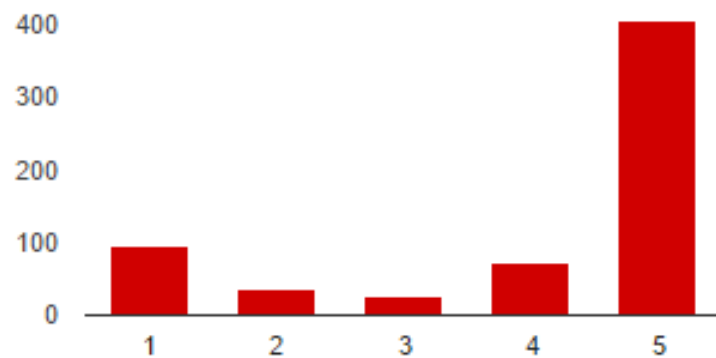
I do not support :	1	49	7.7%
	2	21	3.3%
	3	64	10.1%
	4	136	21.5%
I strongly support :	5	364	57.4%

Would you support the establishment, after a pilot project, of 'smoking shelters' where smokers would be able to smoke without exposing others to secondhand smoke?



I support smoking shelters	201	31.7%
I support smoking shelters only as a temporary step towards a smoke-free campus	302	47.6%
I do not support smoking shelters	105	16.6%
Other	26	4.1%

## Do you support moving towards a "smoke-free" campus?



I do not support :	1	95	15%
	2	36	5.7%
	3	26	4.1%
	4	72	11.4%
I strongly support :	5	405	63.9%

# Survey Comments

- We have selected here a list of comments that speak to several important issues
- Over 160 comments!
- The full list has been made public (warning: some are rude)
- Some comments have been edited for brevity, but again it's all public



# Comments: Student health issues

- “Please enforce this and understand that there are people who have breathing issues. I have asthma and passing through that pile of smoke everytime makes me cough up like crazy. Please fix this issue thank you”
- “Second hand smoke is not fair to individuals like myself that have heart and lung issues. It impedes on our right to health. I should not have a hard time breathing walking around campus.”

# Comments: Student Health Issues

- “As someone with bad asthma and allergies, walking to the libraries is a problem for me. Especially during the winter, smokers congregate around the doors and entryways. The worst example by far is the smoker's alley, right outside of the OSD and McLennan. I regularly go to both during exams. I do not enjoy the immediate effects of passing through second hand smoke, as it makes my asthma act up (even when I take my puffer) and takes away from my studying and exam writing.”
- “I'm allergic to cigarette smoke- the closer we get to a smoke free campus the better!”
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# Comments: Student Health Issues:

- “This is a step towards a healthier learning environment... Personally, I have a very weak and sensitive respiratory tract from having repeated bronchitis and various seasonal colds/flu. Holding my breath while fast walking... is something I'd like to avoid in the future. There are many other students with similar health conditions that are being jeopardized because of a lack of reinforcement of rules that are supposed to already be in place.”
- “I have asthma and secondhand smoke is a huge problem for me, especially when people do not stay in the smoking zones”

# Comments: Student Health Issues

- “I suffer from chronic migraines and cigarette smoke is one of my biggest triggers. As soon as I smell a strong whiff of it or smell it constantly, I get severe pounding pain in my head and I have to lay down and take medication. It is very disconcerting that the laws of smoking prohibition aren't being followed at all, and there is no enforcement of these laws.”

## Comments: Second Hand Smoke

- “Too much second-hand smoke, especially around the”
- “I think the distance from main entrances needs to be more strictly enforced. I do not smoke, and do not appreciate second hand smoke however, as long as smokers do not stand near the entrances to buildings, I don't find them a nuisance in campus in general. Campus is very big and contained so I think an all put ban would be too much.”
- “Getting really tired of almost throwing up if I don't cover my face well enough and run fast enough whenever I go through the underpass to study in the library. Please make it stop.”

# Comments: For Smoke Free

- "On tobacco-free college campuses, fewer students smoked and reported intention to smoke on campus. Strong majorities of students supported outdoor smoking restrictions across all policy types. Comprehensive tobacco-free policies are effective in reducing exposure to smoking and intention to smoke on campus." -Amanda Fallin, Maria Roditis, and Stanton A. Glantz. Association of Campus Tobacco Policies With Secondhand Smoke Exposure, Intention to Smoke on Campus, and Attitudes About Outdoor Smoking Restrictions. American Journal of Public Health: June 2015, Vol. 105, No. 6, pp. 1098-1100."

# Comments: For Smoke Free

- “I support the transition towards a smoke-free campus, due to the negative mental and physical health impacts of smoking and second-hand smoking. However, if the referendum question were to pass and McGill were to transition to a smoke-free campus, I think that it should be **NECESSARY** for McGill to provide the resources to support **ALL** current smokers with cessation methods to quit smoking. It would be **EXTREMELY** inequitable and oppressive to shun the smoking community and leave them having to pay for cessation by themselves, without coverage for nicotine patches, counselling ect. Please be sure to support this minority! Forcing them off campus without being sensitive to their needs would be very harmful!”

# Comments: Against Smoke-Free

- “I think that creating a 'smoke-free' campus would be a removal of students rights. McGill has already been accused of being 'un-free' by being too politically correct and I think that this is a continuation in that direction. If people want to smoke, they should be able to, I don't think that the health risks are unclear to anyone. I would not pledge my student fees to building smoking shelters but I do support the idea of adding smoke cessation programs to the health resources provided at/ funded by McGill. I also do not think that second hand smoke is a real issue at McGill, no matter how many times you walk through that passage under the Redpath bridge”



# Comments: Smoker's Rights

- “Doesn't bother me. Its the smokers right to smoke. University students are smart enough to know the risks of smoking. They smoke in spite of these. McGill is not a high school. Ssmu should do something for better recylcing and visible sustainability projects. Leave smokers alone.”
- "School is stressful. I like smoking cigarettes. Don't take that away from me. The campus is large, and making it entirely smoke free would be a huge inconvenience for people who want to smoke, especially after dark. Who is standing around inhaling second degree smoke in the winter? Seriously, if I can buy cigarettes I should be able to smoke them. It's my campus, too. We don't have enough money to be caring about this.”

# Comments: Butt disposal

- “Cigarette butt littering and disposal is also a big problem. Cigarette recycling bins can help resolve this issue, since the cigarette butts have been shown to be recycled into benches. Such bins have been implemented in various places around the world, such as the City of Vancouver. The use of cigarette recycling bins encourages more responsible smoking habits and would give a nice ecological image of McGill university!”

# Comments: E-Cigs

- “The University should not follow suit with the government of Quebec and equate e-cigarette use/vaping with smoking. Vaping could potentially be a successful smoking cessation technique, and making it more convenient than smoking on University grounds might help public health initiatives on campus. In any case, McGill's smoking policy should not be based on moral policing (i.e. "the act of smoking is evil") but rather on an evidence-based method of achieving a balance between personal freedom and harm reduction.”
- Also some comments on banning e-cigs as well

# Comments

- Many comments in favour of smoking shelters, some opposed to cost/that they would be ineffective
- Several times people actually thanked us for working on this!!

## Next steps

- Working with the student health services to get resources and education campaigns in place
- Working with Gardens & Grounds on smoking shelters
- These two seem non-controversial based on the survey and conversations at Council
- Now for the question of smoke free...

# Smoke free?

- Massive consultation effort
- We are running a plebiscite
- 2 town halls
- 2 Focus groups with smokers
- Reaching out to Unions, MAUT, PGSS
- Once community has pronounced itself, we will work with University to move forward

# If we do, how fast?

- Between 1 and 5 years
- One year till we remake McTavish into a promenade (University may like this date, but may be unrealistic/won't give enough time to get resources into place)
- 5 years- enough time to get resources in place for sure, but too long?
- 3 years as a middle ground?
- Will likely depend on how fast we can get services into place

# Why a town hall?

- Comments showed a diversity of opinions
- We wanted to make sure there was space for debate and conversation before moving forward
- And so, without further ado...



# Discussion questions:

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1. How do people feel about the issue of smoking on campus?

## Discussion questions:

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2. Is second hand smoke an issue on campus?  
Tell us about it?

## Discussion questions:

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3. If people feel second hand smoke and smoking in general is an issue, what do people think are good solutions?

## Discussion questions:

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4. What is the sentiment towards education campaigns? What is effective? Ineffective? What do we want to focus on?

## Discussion questions:

- 5. What is the sentiment towards peer-led culture change and education? How should smoking policies be enforced (or not?)

## Discussion questions:

6. What is the sentiment towards smoking shelters? Should they be temporary? Are they an acceptable permanent solution?

## Discussion questions:

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7. How do people feel about moving towards a smoke free campus? Should this be immediate? Delayed? What is a reasonable delay and why?

## Discussion questions:

8. How about cigarette butt pollution? Are people ok with ashtrays? Other ideas?



## Discussion questions:

9. Many people and researchers think ecigs should be treated differently, as a smoking cessation aid. How do you feel? Ecigs must be used 9m from buildings- is that sufficient? Should people using ecigs need to use smoking shelters or is 9m enough? Should e cigs be banned from campus if we go smoke free , or should we treat them like other smoking cessation tools?

# Discussion questions:

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10. What about marijuana?

# Discussion questions:

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11. Your turn! Suggestions, question, comments, concerns, accolades, thoughts on our proposal- go ahead and treat this as an AMA!

## Discussion questions:

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12. How else should we do consultation? Is what we are doing sufficient?

**THANK YOU!**

.... And good night!