

campaign for a **smoke-free** alberta

- **NEWS RELEASE** -

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HEALTH GROUPS CALL FOR PARKS SMOKING BAN

Alberta health groups are greeting the May 1st opening of provincial parks with a call for a smoking ban in parks, starting with those that currently have a fire ban in place. A growing number of Canadian jurisdictions have banned smoking in parks including metro Vancouver which will implement its outdoor smoking ban on September 1.

“Smoking is a serious fire hazard, a major source of litter and it is inconsistent with the healthy enjoyment of our provincial parks,” said Stuart Adams of Action on Smoking & Health.

“Smoking has no place in areas where people gather – especially children – as it can compromise public health and safety and it poses a significant threat to the environment.”

Smoking is a significant cause of wildfires and littering in provincial parks. Fires ignited by smoking related materials accounted for 6 percent of all fires in Alberta parks between 1996 and 2005. As of April 22 there have already been 291 wildfires across Alberta in 2010 due to dry weather conditions—which is almost double the five year average. A total of 15 provincial parks and recreation areas currently have fire bans in place.

The Town of Sylvan Lake is considering a ban on smoking in outdoor places including its popular beach front. Cigarette litter has become a significant problem for the resort community and residents have voiced concerns about the beach being used as a “giant ashtray”. Local youth groups collected over 200,000 cigarette butts in a single clean-up campaign on the shore of the provincial park beach in 2006.

Health groups are very concerned about the health implications of smoking in provincial parks. “Secondhand smoke is a serious health concern, whether it’s on a beach or in a workplace”, said Tony Hudson of The Lung Association of Alberta and NWT. “Tobacco smoke is a public nuisance that can adversely affect children and people with respiratory and heart conditions especially in confined or crowded outdoor spaces.”

Hudson continued that family recreation areas should not allow smoking around children. “Children are very impressionable and research shows that smoking behaviour modelling by adults contributes to smoking onset among youth. This behaviour is not consistent with the healthy enjoyment of our provincial parks and it sends a contradictory message to young people about the importance of smoking prevention. The Alberta government can promote a

more consistent message about the importance of smoking prevention by banning smoking in our provincial parks”.

A public opinion poll of 3,328 Albertans aged 15 and over conducted by the Alberta Cancer Board in 2007 found that 70% of respondents supported a smoking ban in public parks and on beaches.

CSFA is an Alberta coalition of prominent health organizations that are working collaboratively to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco use.

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