

OPINION:

When I was a small child my dear mom used to say these words to me "*How often do I have to tell you...?*" She need not have said one word because her face displayed an expression that said, better than words ever could.....

"Stop messing with me OR ELSE!"

Anyone reading the local press during these past couple of weeks could be excused for using that same expression.... "*How often do I have to tell you?*" as the subject of the *No Smoking* by-law came on the table at council yet again.

Councilors, what is difficult to understand about the need to put an end to smoking in enclosed public places? According to a spokesperson in Ernie Parson's office, the destructive effects of smoking on health costs the province of Ontario, OR SHOULD I SAY US, THE TAXPAYERS, about \$4 BILLION per annum. This is a huge number. What is Prince Edward County's 'contribution?'

Sadly, the approach of some of our elected municipal representatives seems to be to continue providing public places where this habit can continue to be 'enjoyed'. The justification is, for some, an economic one, citing financial losses to local business if a ban continues, and even the threat of closure if the smoking clients take their business elsewhere. According to at least one councilor, there is at present an inequity in the by-laws whereby private clubs are able to permit smoking on their premises. This must be amended so that ALL places used by the public are included in the *No Smoking* legislation. There needs to be a level playing field, with the pubs and clubs attracting their clients on merit and ambiance, rather than who has the edge on the by-law.

We know that some smokers are trapped by their addiction, and some would say that they simply enjoy what they are doing and will not quit. Each and every day, hundreds of Canadian children will take their first drag on a cigarette, kill the first few cells in their lungs, and consequently initiate their first step on the road to addiction. At the risk of appearing to inhibit personal rights and freedoms, this is simply not acceptable any more. We must stop minors smoking. We can also help the addicted with this legislation. Anyone who has successfully quit smoking will attest, that the toughest time during quitting was... when in company, with a drink in the hand.

So let's get real for a moment and face what is accepted the world over as THE FACTS:
Smoking is a dinosaur, as history will confirm in the next 50 or 100 years.

Smoking is an addiction.

Smoking almost always causes ill health of various types. Smoking can cause premature death.

Second hand smoke can and does do both of the above

Tobacco companies are being successfully sued for \$Billions over these facts. It is only a matter of time before legislators (Governments and Municipalities) who fail to implement their legislation preventing smoking in public places, will also be facing class action suites, with the consequently huge legal costs. Frightening thought Prince Edward County? But there again, our citizens are all law abiding and would never think of allowing smoking in premises covered by the no smoking by-laws. Thank goodness for those good people who recognize the common sense of this issue and choose to comply. They deserve our business, and our maximum support.

So, Mayor Finnegan, here is my message to our local council which I am sure is supported by a large majority of residents of the County. Make this debate the FINAL one. Provide a level playing field for all establishments in the County, private or public, which offer a service to the public. "**No Smoking**" must be here to stay. You have already spent too much time and money on this issue; time and money that would have been better spent by our mayor and councilors (among other things) making a concerted effort to seek and attract new industry to the County. Surely this is a priority for you Mayor Finnegan, and the rest of your able team?

Bill Yates.

p.s. Only in North America.....do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front. Makes you think!

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Please check your calendar to make sure you are available for these dates. We will mainly be rehearsing on Friday nights (7:00) and Saturday mornings (9:30). Make sure these days and times work for you as well.

Questions? Call Lori (476-7241)

If you are interested in working backstage, please send me an e-mail so I can let you know about the first production meeting.

- Lori <marysburghmummers@hotmail.com>