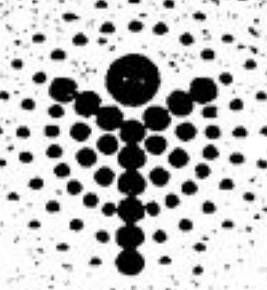


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## Smokers' rights group rallies against legislation

BY ROY GREEN  
Staff Writer

Rick Jennings travelled the icy streets and fog from Mississauga Wednesday night, hoping there might be some good news ahead for smokers and entertainment industry workers.

"The government doesn't know the damage they're doing," said the pony-tailed professional musician as he took his first few puffs outside a community centre in Woodbridge just seconds after a smokers' rights meeting came to an end.

"They say they're concerned about the health of bartenders and wait staff, but shutting down the smoking rooms is ruining the business. Three bars I played in Scarborough have already shut down."

Mr. Jennings and about 20 other hardy souls showed up to hear Nancy Daigneault, the president of mychoice.ca, discuss the organization's attempts to at least slow down the tide of anti-smoking legislation across the province, particularly the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, introduced in December and likely to become law later this year.

If it passes in its present form, Ontarians will be allowed to smoke at home and outdoors, but will have to butt out almost everywhere else by May 31, 2006. Even smoking in vehicles used for work, reserved seats at open-air sports stadiums or underground parking garages would flout the act, billed as the toughest in North America. It also calls for the closure of designated smoking rooms in bars, taverns, restaurants and bingo halls.

Ms Daigneault told the group her organization, which is funded by tobac-



**NANCY DAIGNEAULT:** Head of mychoice.ca hopes to slow tide of anti-tobacco legislation.

co interests, is hoping to convince Health Minister George Smitherman to hold public hearings on the proposal.

"We're not trying to turn back the clock to the days when smokers could light up anywhere they wanted, but where's the logic in banning smoking from underground garages where the air is already thick with pollutants?" she asked.

She urged participants to e-mail, phone or write their MPPs, the health minister and Premier Dalton McGuinty.

"They sit up and take notice when they begin hearing from thousands of people," she said.

Vaughan Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio, who was instrumental in passing York Region's tough smoking bylaw, expressed surprise about Ms Daigneault's efforts.

"Smoking is a thing of the past," she said. "These people should get a life."



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