

Cigar smokers left out in cold

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

Whether you're a Tony Soprano wanna-be or simply enjoy the occasional cigar, you will soon feel the wrath of anti-smoking advocates.

That's because in less than three weeks, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, brings in sweeping regulations.

The legislation will replace York Region's anti-smoking bylaw with a provincewide ban in all public places and workplaces by June.

It means for the first time since governments began phasing in anti-smoking regulations, private clubs, such as cigar lounges and bars and restaurants with enclosed designated smoking rooms, will now have to comply.

The changes will further fragment an already tiny portion of the tobacco industry, said Sarah Iles, owner of Cigar Bodega in Unionville.

"It's already a seasonal business," she said.

This month's changes will force her to close the doors of a smoking lounge at her Main Street store, which will drive away business from smokers who had previously enjoyed a respite from winter's bitter cold.

Long popular among golfers and business types, cigar smoking has enjoyed a resurgence of sorts the past few years as the "it" fad, particularly among York's well-heeled population.

But you aren't likely to see cigarette smokers sharing sidewalk space outside bars and restaurants with someone smoking a \$50 Cuban cigar.

"It's a lifestyle thing. Cigars are something to enjoy when you have time to relax," Ms Iles said.

Therefore, it shouldn't be lumped in with the province's smoke-free measures, she said.

Tobacconists, such as her specialty shop, are already exempt from a subsequent phase of the legislation that calls for the



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Smokers won't be able to stop by designated cigar lounges after the Smoke-Free Ontario Act comes in in less than three weeks. The legislation will replace York Region's anti-smoking bylaw with a provincewide ban in all public places and workplaces by June.

removal of all tobacco-related products on display in 2008.

In the meantime, the smoking lounge is already being dismantled as Ms Iles said she intends to comply with the new rules.

As does staff at Vaughans Paramount Conference and Event Venue in Woodbridge.

The posh facility, which

opened to much fanfare just a few years ago, included a smoking lounge and humididor for guests.

Now parent company ByPeterandPauls is also in the process of converting it, said general manager Daniel Salazar, adding the new rules go too far.

"I understand there's no smoking inside the actual

building. But not allowing it on patios and separate lounges. Now we're going to extremes," he said.

In places where smoking is already banned, business has adapted and thrived, said Neil Collishaw, research director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada.

"When you start making

exceptions, it leads to more exceptions," he said.

"The whole purpose of protecting people equally will be eaten away at."

As for anyone hankering for a robusto and corona after May 31, it seems they will either have to risk stinking up their home or crossing their fingers for warm sunny days.

BUTT OUT

► **DON'T GET A ROOM:** Designated smoking rooms will no longer be permitted in restaurants, bars, casinos, bingo halls, bowling alleys and billiard halls. Private clubs, such as Canadian legions and social clubs, will not be exempt.

► **SMOKE-FREE:** All licensed private home daycares must be smoke-free at all times, even when there are no children present.

► **FORGET PROMOS:** Restrictions will be placed on the promotion of tobacco products by retailers, with a complete ban on the display of tobacco products in May 2008.

► **NEW & IMPROVED:** The legislation replaces the 1994 Tobacco Control Act and

► **SAVING LIVES:** Health officials believe the new legislation will help prevent the more than 1,000 annual deaths in Canada related to

PUFFING AWAY

Some well known cigar aficionados:

► **WINSTON CHURCHILL:** The former British Prime Minister and orator was seldom photographed without a cigar in hand.

► **GEORGE BURNS:** The American comic, who, despite being an avid cigar smoker, lived to 100 and

► **ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER:** California governor and Hollywood superstar.

With that in mind, The Last Big Smoke will be held May 30 at The Drake Hotel on Queen Street in Toronto. Tickets are \$75.

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