

Smoking ban would hurt region's restaurants, owner says

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from playgrounds.

Non-smokers' rights groups and the region agree, smoke-free bylaws for outdoor recreational spaces will protect York Region residents, especially young children, from exposure to second-hand smoke.

However, some business owners are crying foul.

Outlawing open air, uncovered patio smoking areas at bars and restaurants is a step too far, Orleans Restaurant and Jazz Lounge owner and operator Stuart Maclean said.

"It's too much Big Brother," the Newmarket restaurateur said. "It's a big issue. Would a parking lot be a public area? Eventually the only

place where you can smoke is in your own home or back yard. It's time to quit beating up on smokers."

But a wider smoking ban has strong support, said Non-Smokers' Rights Association policy analyst Pippa Beck.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Since the Smoke-Free Ontario Act was implemented, municipalities have been adding non-smoking buffer zones around public buildings and recreational areas, Ms Beck said.

"It's what the public wants," she said. "It's a definite trend and York Region fits into that trend. There's lots of room for improvement and this is one of them."

In addition to stemming second-hand smoke, tougher bylaws would reduce cigarette litter, which has been proven to be toxic to children, wildlife and the environment, the region's report noted.

Equally important is the elimination of smoker modeling among impressionable kids.

"When children are playing sports, you don't want parents on the sidelines smoking," Ms Beck said. "It's a disconnect. A smoke-free environment helps prevent kids from starting."

The health risks associated with smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke are well documented, the report said, adding there is no safe amount of second-hand smoke.

Ontario municipalities have the ability to prohibit or regulate smoking in any public place or workspace under section 115 of the Municipal Act, 2001. Numerous Ontario towns and cities, including Barrie, Collingwood, Orillia, Peterborough and Toronto, have bylaws that go further than provincial legislation in banning smoking in outdoor recreational areas. These may include playgrounds, parks, pools, sports fields, festivals and zoos.

'BIG BROTHER TOO STRONG'

In York Region, two municipalities have bylaws restricting the use of tobacco outdoors. Georgina prohibits smoking on Civic Centre soccer pitches and Newmarket has designated Sunnyhill Park, next to

Southlake Regional Health Centre, smoke-free in support of the hospital's smoke-free policy.

York Region is setting a good example, Ms Beck said.

Not so much for businesses catering to the nicotine dependent, Mr. Maclean said.

"Big Brother is getting too strong," he said. "What we need are better bylaws about trash and the effects on the water table, not patios."

If puffers are not allowed to light up anywhere near an eatery or watering hole, the hospitality industry will suffer, he added.

"I'd probably get a couple of tickets and I'd pay them just so that I'd have a say in court," Mr. Maclean said.

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By visiting the York Region Administrative Centre, Supplies and Services Branch, First Floor, 17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket
An Information Meeting will be held on Monday, February 14, 2011 from 2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. in the Seminar Room (first floor) at the York Region Administrative Centre, 17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket. Pre-registration is not required.

The deadline for proposal submission is: Thursday, March 3, 2011 at 1 p.m. prompt.

Late submissions will not be accepted

For more information:

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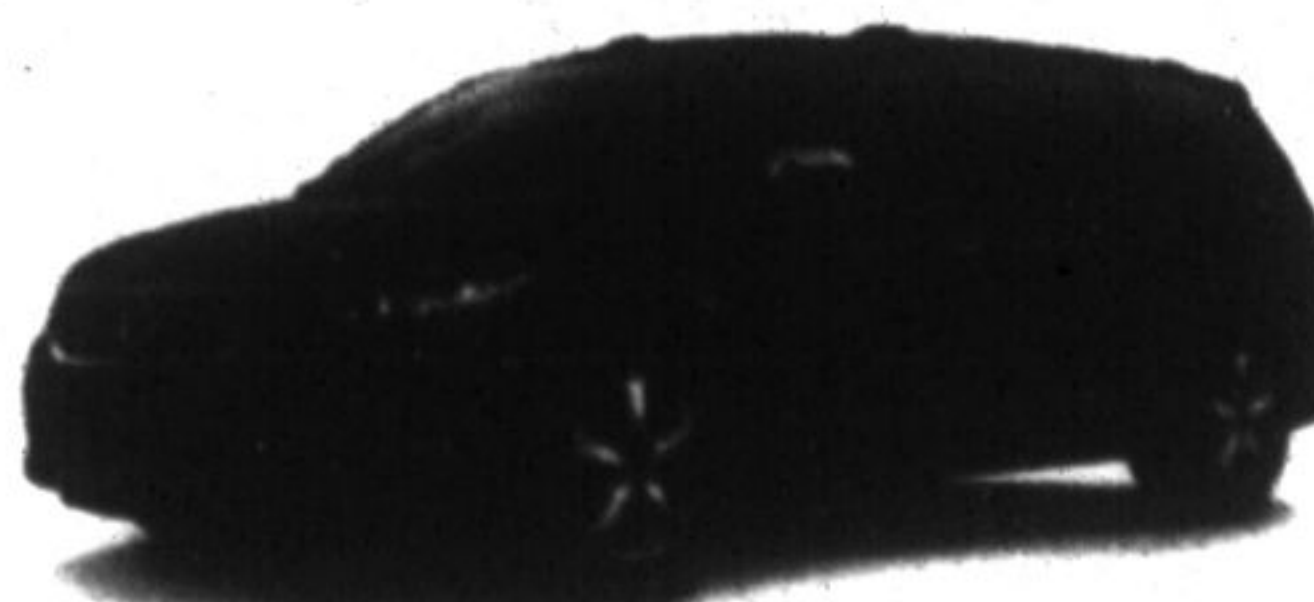
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