

Wednesday January 29, 2014

The Manitoulin-Expositor

DSB moves towards smoke free rental units

ESPANOLA—Director of Integrated Social Services Donna Moroso delivered a report reviewing the issues in moving toward a smoke free social housing policy to the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB).

“Second hand smoke is a very complex issue,” said Ms. Moroso. “There are various factors to be considered.” Those factors include increased cost to unit turnover, rights versus risks, balancing the rights of smokers and non-smokers, discrimination and human rights issues and the health and welfare of residents.

Ms. Moroso noted that within the housing portfolio, all common areas in apartment buildings are currently non-smoking as per the current Smoke-free Ontario Act.

“It is also a fact that units of tenants who smoke cost much more to turn over than units of non-smoking residents due to wall discolouration, burns, smell and additional hours for turnover,” said Ms. Moroso. “It should be noted that units of smoking residents almost always are painted at an average of \$1,000 for a one-bedroom unit. Cleaning alone does not completely cover the odour.”

Residents of the DSB social housing units are currently being surveyed as to their thoughts regarding a smoke-free policy. “Results are being currently compiled,” said Ms. Moroso.

The review was conducted with the objective view that “it is desirable to achieve a smoke-free environment in as many buildings as possible within the social housing portfolio,” said Ms. Moroso. “This can be done systemically to individual buildings on a go-forward basis as we are not looking to terminate tenancies for this purpose.”

The director noted that the considerations that need to be evaluated going forward are: does the DSB go smoke-free with all buildings; does the DSB give notice to all tenants and go smoke-free afterwards; does the DSB grandfather the existing tenants and any new tenants would be informed of the new smoke free policy; and does the DSB test one building to begin with?

“The survey results will determine the next steps by way of analyzing the demand for non-smoking buildings,” said Ms. Moroso, adding that “staff are recommending that the board support the development of a smoke-free policy within the social housing portfolio.”

DSB CEO Fern Dominelli noted that other jurisdictions are formalizing policies around non-smoking. “But they advise us to go slow,” he said. “As smokers leave, new tenants will be informed of the policy. If we start now, it is estimated it will take 10 to 20 years to implement this across the region.”

Central Manitoulin Councillor Derek Stephens voiced his reluctance to support the policy. “I still have problems with that, but I have stated it before. It is discriminatory.”

[Michael Erskine](#)