

Editorial ? Smoking rules will surely save lives

New rules when it comes to smoking are slated to take effect all over Peel Region, including Caledon, next week. As of Monday, people will not be allowed to smoke within 30 feet of municipal facilities. This will include municipal offices, community centres, ambulance stations, police stations, fire halls, public transit facilities, playgrounds or sports/activity area, and that includes spectator seating areas.

While there is a natural inclination to applaud the move, we also feel something of a need to ask what took so long. The aim of these new rules is to protect people from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke.

?There is no safe level of second-hand smoke, and it is most harmful to children because their lungs are smaller and they breathe more rapidly than adults,? stated a release that was issued earlier this week by the Region. ?Children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to develop asthma, ear infections, bronchitis and pneumonia.?

And while we view this as good news, there is still room to be troubled that tobacco is available at all these days. The harmful impacts it has on people who use it, and those around them, has been well-documented over the years. Many have been the times that we have heard that tobacco is about the only product on the market that can kill you if you use it as directed.

Imposing restrictions on its use in the private sector, such as restricting its sale to people of a certain age, and banning its use in places where the public shops or eats, are certainly steps in the right direction. Making it more expensive through taxation can also help discourage people from smoking (and since those who take ill from smoking put more of a burden on our health system, we can't believe that adding taxes to tobacco is unfair).

But government has a role to play, over and beyond barking out orders regarding smoking. They are obligated to control it on their turf, and that's what this new bylaw is doing.

Many people in our society smoke. They shouldn't, but they do. There are also many among us who used to smoke, but don't any more. It's not been easy. Tobacco is addictive, and quitting is very hard for some. But there are lots and lots of people who have found the will power to quit. Some have been scared by the health warnings, some have quit because it became too expensive to continue and others realized there were fewer and fewer places where it's permitted.

Our municipal authorities have imposed more restrictions, further cutting the number of places where smoking is permitted. These new rules will be tough on some people, especially in the short-term.

But in the long-run, we believe a lot more people are going to benefit.

Is there anything more important than that?