

# OLD GRACE HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE

## AIR QUALITY PROTECTION POLICY

### 1. BACKGROUND

In 2015, prior to the start of construction, co-op members agreed that smoking would not be permitted in any part of the development. It was on this basis that members applied for suites in the co-op and subsequently became residents. The co-op building was designed and constructed to meet LEED certification standards, ensuring that residents would be provided with a healthy indoor environment.

In 2018, co-op members approved the *Environmental Sustainability Policy* which details efforts the co-op is making through routine maintenance and cleaning to protect the health of all residents, visitors and employees by ensuring good air quality. In particular, Schedule 4 addresses a healthy indoor environment and good quality air.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents, visitors and employees of Old Grace Housing Cooperative. The policy aims to balance residents' right to quiet enjoyment with their right to reasonable accommodation of special needs based on a characteristic protected by the Manitoba Human Rights Code, such as disability, ancestry and religion. In particular, the co-op is committed to following these principles in a spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and understanding:

- a. We respect and support Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices. We recognize that the burning of traditional medicines is a part of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditional way of life.
- b. We recognize that some members may burn incense or other scented materials as part of their religious practice.
- c. We recognize that some members who smoke or vape cannabis or other medicines as treatment for a health condition may be unable to use an alternative form for effective treatment.
- d. We recognize that members with environmental sensitivities may be negatively affected by: smoking; burning traditional medicines or other scented materials; vapour from cannabis or other materials used for medical purposes; or other air contaminants such as scented cleaning products.
- e. OGHC affirms its duty to look for solutions to accommodate the disability-related needs of members who use smoke or vapour for a medical purpose, as well as members with disability-related environmental sensitivities.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Air contaminants** – Indoor air quality is affected by many potential contaminants, in the form of particles (such as smoke) and gases or vapours (such as volatile organic compounds originating from scented products). This policy is concerned with indoor air contaminants that

trigger environmental sensitivity symptoms. Common irritants include but are not limited to: perfumes, air fresheners, cleaning products, paint, fumes, and laundry products.

- b. **Environmental sensitivities** – a chronic condition in which an individual experiences debilitating symptoms triggered by breathing in relatively low levels of contaminants, at a level most people tolerate.
- c. **Religious practice** – a practice associated with religion. Religion typically involves a particular and comprehensive system of faith and worship. Religion is about freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs connected to an individual's spiritual faith and integrally linked to one's self-definition and spiritual fulfilment, the practices of which allow individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith.
- d. **Smoking** – includes carrying, inhaling or exhaling lit tobacco, cannabis or other products that generate smoke. It also includes possessing those things while they are lit, whether or not they are being carried, inhaled or exhaled.
- e. **Smudging** – the burning of traditional medicines such as sweetgrass, sage, tobacco and/or cedar for cultural or spiritual purposes, as part of an Indigenous observance.
- f. **Vaping / Vapourizing** – inhaling vapour through the mouth from an electronic device that vapourizes a liquid or solid.

#### **4. SMOKING and VAPING**

All forms of smoking and vaping are prohibited on the Old Grace Housing Co-operative property, including:

- a. inside members' suites;
- b. on private-use patios, porches and balconies;
- c. in common areas used by residents and visitors, both indoor and outdoor;
- d. elsewhere on co-op property.

This prohibition is supported by the fact that second-hand smoke or vapour, and other air-borne pollutants, cause respiratory irritation and are known health risks. Odours from smoking or vaping negatively affect interior air quality and disturb other residents. Residual odour may remain detectable in a suite even when it is vacated by the resident. All members benefit from the annual discount that the co-op receives on its insurance premiums, by virtue of being a no-smoking building.

#### **5. SMUDGING and BURNING SCENTED MATERIALS**

Because members with environmental sensitivities may be negatively affected by smoke from burning materials, members who wish to smudge or burn incense or other scented materials on co-op property must submit an accommodation request.

#### **6. AIR CONTAMINANTS**

- a. Members are encouraged to become aware of the potential negative effects of air contaminants. Other than tobacco smoke, perfumes are one of the most noticeable air

contaminants and are reported to cause difficulties for most people with environmental sensitivities. Fragrances in personal care products, laundry and cleaning products may contain ingredients that are respiratory irritants or asthma triggers.

- b. Schedule 4 of the *Environmental Sustainability Policy* aims to protect the health of co-op members through measures such as prohibiting smoking on co-op property and advertising all co-op meetings as “scent-free” events. In order to reinforce these goals, the co-op encourages members to treat common areas as “scent-free zones.” The co-op further encourages members to consider potential negative effects on neighbours when using scented products in their suites.

## **7. ACCOMMODATION**

- a. As a housing provider, the co-op must make best efforts to accommodate members who:
  - i. smoke or vape cannabis or other medicines as treatment for a health condition and are unable to use an alternative form of the drug for effective treatment;
  - ii. smudge as part of an Indigenous observance, or perform comparable religious practices;
  - iii. have environmental sensitivities and are negatively affected by air contaminants originating from OGHC premises.
- b. When a member requests accommodation, the Board will gather information to understand the nature and extent of accommodation required; obtain expert opinion where needed; and take a lead role in investigating possible solutions.
- c. Members requesting accommodation should initially contact the President. The President will form a small ad-hoc committee tasked with reviewing the request and bringing a recommendation to the Board. Requests for accommodation will be kept confidential.
- d. When an accommodation request is granted, a written agreement will be signed with the member, which may be subject to periodic re-approval by the Board.
- e. Members who request accommodation are expected to apply “good neighbour” considerations. It is each member's responsibility to make best efforts to mitigate negative impacts on neighbours.
- f. When accommodation is granted, members must follow procedures prescribed in their agreement with the board

## **8. ACCOMMODATION REQUEST REQUIREMENTS**

- a. Members who request accommodation to smoke or vape cannabis or other medicines as treatment for a health condition must explain the need for accommodation and confirm that alternative forms are not feasible for effective treatment.
- b. The co-op's insurer requires the Board to document all instances where a co-op member has been given permission to smoke or vape cannabis or other medicines within their suite, in contravention of the co-op's Air Quality Protection Policy.
- c. Members who request accommodation to smudge in a common area of the co-op, as part of an Indigenous observance, must identify the time and place of smudging at least seven (7)

days in advance of the planned ceremony, in order to facilitate the accommodation of residents who may be adversely impacted. The amount of material burned should be kept to the minimum required for the ceremony.

- d. When members are granted accommodation to smudge or burn scented material in their suite as part of an Indigenous observance or religious practice, the amount of material burned should be kept to a minimum to prevent odours and smoke from spreading to adjacent suites.

## **9. MEMBER LIABILITY**

Within their suite, and on private-use patios, porches and balconies, members will be held responsible for compliance with the co-op's Air Quality Protection Policy by:

- a. family members and other occupants of their suite;
- b. visitors to their suite;
- c. short-term and long-term guests;
- d. people hired by the member to provide a service or product.

## **10. ADMINISTRATION**

- a. People interested in becoming future co-op members will be informed of the co-op's Air Quality Protection Policy on the OGHC website and during new member information meetings. A statement of agreement with the policy is included in the *Wait List Application Form*.
- b. When a co-op suite becomes available, the applicant must fill out a *Suite and Membership Application Form*. This form requires applicants to sign a statement of agreement with the co-op's Air Quality Protection Policy.
- c. Persons hired by the Board to provide a service or product will be informed of the co-op's Air Quality Protection Policy and will be expected to comply with this while on co-op property.
- d. Members should inform any persons that they hire themselves of the co-op's policy.

## **11. MEMBER COMPLAINTS AND POLICY VIOLATIONS**

- a. A member with a complaint regarding a prohibited activity by a neighbour, or by someone in their household, should first make a reasonable attempt to resolve the issue through a respectful discussion.
- b. If the prohibited activity continues, the member should send a written message to the co-op's Property Manager, specifying the date, time and location of the incident(s).
- c. The Property Manager will handle breaches of the policy in consultation with the Board.