



Monday » January
15 » 2007

Calgary bars butting out Bylaw officers seeing compliance to smoking ban

Colette Derworiz

Calgary Herald

Saturday, January 13, 2007

Bylaw officers and licence inspectors have blitzed bars that have been defying the city's smoking bylaw, but no charges were laid because most have stopped allowing patrons to light up.

Alvin Murray, operations manager for animal and bylaw services, said officers visited nine businesses Friday morning.

"Seven were in full compliance," he said. "Two, which had not previously been issued warnings, were issued warnings for some infractions."

About 40 warnings have been given to bars breaking the new smoke-free rules. Charges could be laid "at any time" against any establishment that has received a warning.

"We have officers who cover seven days a week," Murray said.

The city has received more than 430 phone calls -- both complaints and questions -- related to the smoking bylaw since it came into effect Jan. 1.

While some bars that have received warnings were unclear of the rules, others were openly defying the bylaw as they awaited the outcome of a

Feb. 8 court challenge of the new rules.

An exemption for casinos and bingo halls has resulted in the legal challenge by 35 bars. But those bar owners were advised by their lawyer this week to go smoke-free until an injunction bid is heard Monday.

Several bar owners who have been complying with the rules said business is booming since the bylaw came into effect. In northeast Calgary, the manager of Nicastro's Neighbourhood Pub said his customers are welcoming the smoke-free bar.

"The response has been great," said John Nicastro, noting he crunched some numbers and sales are up 15 per cent over the same period last year.

"It's been phenomenal," he said.

Non-smoking customers at bars across the city said they prefer the smoke-free atmosphere. "I think it's awesome," said Rodney Soloway, who was having a beer earlier this week at the Bent Elbow Pub in southwest Calgary. "The air seems a lot cleaner."

cderworiz@theherald.canwest.com

© The Calgary Herald 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.