



VINCENZO D'ALTO THE GAZETTE

Audrey Gendron takes a break from work at BeBop Bar on St. Denis St. Smoking in Quebec bars will be illegal as of Jan. 1.

# Ban lights up waft of protest

## Bars, restaurants to stub out Jan. 1

A stroll along St. Denis St. reveals establishments already have own protocols

Walk up St. Denis St. from Ste. Catherine St. E. and you'll see all the Montreal lunchtime clichés – the real ones – panhandlers, potholes, taxi drivers way too trigger happy with their horns, enough to-go lattes to float a supertanker and, of course, smokers.

The smokers stroll, sit at terraces or stand in front stores or restaurants, their body English suggesting they're just out for a quick one, the fact many of them have hands cupped around their cigarettes, confirming that they know the panhandlers are out and may try to bum one.

They are living examples of humanity's ability to adapt, to adjust their routines – and their addiction – to changing circumstances. But walk into the BeBop Bar and you'll meet Dan Romano, who thinks this changing circumstances thing is getting way way out of hand.

"Basically, what we're doing is drawing a line in the sand, what we're saying is that the government is going too far with its nanny state imperatives trying to force people to be-



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have," he says.

The "we" to whom Romano is referring is the 35-member Citizens Against Government Encroachment and the latest state imperative being Bill 112, the provincial ban on smoking in bars and restaurants that goes into effect on Jan. 1.

"You shouldn't smoke, you shouldn't be fat, you shouldn't drink – it's not the kind of society we want to live in and it isn't part of the government's mandate," he said.

Romano is a 40-year-old business consultant who is physically fit and doesn't smoke and said he has received no support from the tobacco industry.

In fact, he said, the idea for CAGE had been kicking around since last year, when the federal

government banned trans fats in foods.

"We're trying to unify the different groups that are hampered by these kind of laws to make one, unified voice against the government," he said.

One of the voices that is already onside with Romano belongs to Sébastien Ianuzzi, manager of the BeBop and wondering how long he'll be doing business once Bill 112 becomes law.

"Ninety-eight per cent of my customers are smokers," he said. "If they can't come in here and smoke, six months later, I'm finished. I'm closing up."

Ianuzzi said he doesn't oppose anti-smoking laws, per se, but thinks restaurateurs should have a choice.

"It's like getting a liquor licence. You have a choice of being a restaurant or being a bar... If I make this a smokers' bar and six months later I'm closed – it was my choice and my fault because I didn't gauge my clientele."

And Ianuzzi said he's a little dazed and confused over whether government's against tobacco or just smoke.

"They talk about legalizing pot and yet banning cigarettes. There's something there that doesn't make sense."

Romano figures governments

spend too much time involved in social engineering when they should be doing what they got elected to do – a mandate that ranges from filling potholes to making sure the health system works to ensuring the education system doesn't collapse.

But even though a stroll along St. Denis with Romano reveals bar after restaurant after coffee shop that has independently established protocols to cater to smokers, non-smokers or both, there is nagging suspicion that no matter how many people flock to CAGE's standard, the fix, as they say, is in.

Walk back toward Ste. Catherine, count the number of smokers among the hundreds of passers-by and you'll come up with a ratio slightly higher than the one in four suggested by the polls.

But even if it was higher, that doesn't change the fact Bill 112 will be law.

And Ianuzzi, despite his claim he prefers to get ticketed for tobacco law violations than give in, will probably end up doing the same thing smokers around the world have learned to do over the past 20 years.

Adapt.

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