

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STUDYING SMOKERS

Re We Increasingly Empathize With Addicts, But We Still Tar Smokers (Opinion, Nov. 30): We should consider who we are referring to when we talk about smokers.

In Canada, smoking is increasingly divided by social class, where smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke are highest among the socio-economically disadvantaged compared with more affluent groups. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada's report on health inequalities, people without a high-school degree are about four times more likely to smoke than

those with a postsecondary education.

There is no doubt that smoking is harmful to health. But with every stigmatizing comment or reproachful glare to someone smoking, we are shaming people more likely to be socially disadvantaged. Instead of policing smoking, our efforts should be focused on improving the social conditions that put populations at a disproportionately higher risk of smoking.

■ **Josée Lapalme** PhD candidate,
École de santé publique de
l'Université de Montréal

