Manitoba Lung Association
BREATHE

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Dear Winnipeg City Council,

On behalf of the Manitoba Lung Association and our health partners, we would like to applaud the City of Winnipeg for protecting residents by seeking to regulate hookah lounges. The regulation of hookah lounges is a step forward in protecting the health of all Winnipeg residents, particularly our youth and those working in our hospitality sector.

Upon the city's completion of a jurisdictional scan for regulatory practices regarding hookah, it is our belief if done thoroughly, the council should conclude that the best practice for hookah regulation is to align shisha restrictions to that of tobacco and cannabis use. This would mean a complete ban on hookah lounges in the city of Winnipeg as tobacco and cannabis use are not permitted indoors within any public establishments.

To summarize what your judicial scan will surely conclude:

The trend across Canada has been to ban all waterpipe smoking in public places, including non-tobacco "herbal" hookah smoking. Eight provinces and territories prohibit smoking of all waterpipe products, including herbal non-tobacco waterpipe products, in places where smoking is banned including:

1. Quebec (July 24, 2008)
2. Nova Scotia (May 31, 2015)
3. New Brunswick (July 1, 2015)
4. Prince Edward Island (Sept. 1, 2015)
5. Newfoundland and Labrador (July 1, 2017)
6. Nunavut (Oct. 17, 2018)
7. Yukon Territory (Mar. 5, 2020)
8. Northwest Territories (Mar. 31, 2020)[1]

Municipalities With Hookah Bans also include:

In Ontario: Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor, Barrie, Orillia, Hamilton, Peterborough, and the Halton, Niagara, and Peel regions.

In BC: Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Burnaby, and Vancouver.

In Alberta: Edmonton, Airdrie, Red Deer, and ten other Alberta municipalities.

Furthermore, countries with traditional cultural ties to hookah that now have comprehensive bans include: Middle Eastern countries like Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

African countries like Egypt, Tanzania, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ghana and Kenya.

Southeast Asian countries like Singapore. As well as the Indian states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh.

Even large cities like Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, Cairo, in Egypt, and New Delhi, in India have also recently banned hookahs at cafes and restaurants as a precaution against the spread of communicable diseases and other health risks.

The current motion to evaluate shisha industry mitigation strategies regarding shisha use in indoor workplaces causes concern.

Action item 2 a and b has the potential to put shisha establishment staff and patrons at risk of chronic and infectious disease. The Lung Association, Manitoba therefore appreciates the opportunity to share information with the Council regarding this important health issue.

Extensive evidence indicates that shisha use is associated with lung cancer, respiratory illness, low birth weight, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, and adverse cardiac events. Both the firsthand and secondhand smoke produced by shisha use contain known carcinogens at levels equal to other commercial tobacco products.

People who are exposed to shisha smoke are at risk of the same adverse health outcomes as individuals exposed to secondhand commercial tobacco smoke even when herbal shisha products are used. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke and that includes all shisha smoke.

All the places listed above with comprehensive bans on hookah lounges have already concluded from the vast studies and material available globally on waterpipes, that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke from shisha. Even tobaccoless shisha.

Furthermore, The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers published a Position Document on Environmental Tobacco Smoke. It states that there are no ventilation systems available that can provide safe levels of exposure for workers or patrons of indoor smoking lounges. This coupled with other research concludes that even tobaccoless shisha contains considerable variations in heavy metal content including lead, chromium, nickel, and arsenic. “Smoke emission analyses indicated that toxic byproducts produced by the combustion of 'herbal' shisha were equivalent or greater than those produced by tobacco shisha.” The results also found that air quality assessment demonstrated that mean PM2.5 levels and CO content were significantly higher in waterpipe establishments compared to casinos where cigarette smoking was permitted.

The information available is quite conclusive that while properly designed and operated ventilation systems can reduce levels of pollutants, ventilation is not an option because a ventilation system with the technology to eliminate all secondhand smoke does not exist.

The best practice, as recognized globally by the World Health Organization, is a ban on hookah in any place where smoking is banned because all second-hand smoke has the potential to cause death, disability, and disease.

Waterpipes should be included with cigarettes in any and all clean indoor air policies and waterpipe cafés or lounges should not be exempt from clean indoor air legislation.

Public support for banning hookah lounges is high in Manitoba. A public opinion survey commissioned in 2019 found that of the 1,909 Manitoban respondents surveyed 80% of respondents aged 18 and over, supported a ban on the use of waterpipes in all public places where tobacco use is banned.

It is the conclusion of the Manitoba Lung Association, and its health partners that the city council is taking a step in the right direction by looking at regulating hookah lounges within the city. It is also our hope that this council will come to the same conclusion that many municipal, provincial, and national governments across the globe have already concluded.

Waterpipes should be restricted in the same way that all tobacco and cannabis use is within our city's clean air legislation.

This will be better for enforcement, awareness, and the health impacts on Winnipeg residents.

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The Issue

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On November 20, 2023, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services did not concur in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, and submitted the following to the Executive Policy Committee and Council:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to develop a by-law for the purpose of banning hookahs indoors and on patios. A. That the by-law be enforced at the stage of occupancy permit application or public complaint. B. That the by-law be developed in cooperation with relevant City departments.

2. Notwithstanding the adoption of a by-law, that the City of Winnipeg request the Province of Manitoba to amend existing legislation to accommodate the banning of hookahs indoors and on patios within the City of Winnipeg.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to fulfill the intent of the foregoing.

Background

Waterpipe smoking, also commonly known as 'hookah', is a form of smoking that typically includes a headpiece where tobacco is placed, a body, a water bowl, hoses, and a mouthpiece.

Charcoal is used to heat the tobacco known as shisha or Mu'assel which are the substances typically smoked with a waterpipe. These products are moist, heavily flavoured, contain either honey or glycerin, and often contain tobacco. Flavourings, such as apple, mint, cherry, chocolate, etc., are added to make them more appealing. Shisha without tobacco is also available and is often referred to as "herbal."

However, "herbal" shisha smoking is still harmful to the user and to non-smokers who breathe the emissions. A typical session of waterpipe smoking is about 45 minutes long, is usually performed with groups, and results in burning and smoking about 20 grams of 'shisha'.(1)

Health Impacts

Extensive epidemiological evidence indicates that waterpipe tobacco smoking is associated with lung cancer, respiratory illness, low birth weight, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, adverse cardiac events, and periodontal disease. Repeated exposure to nicotine during waterpipe use can lead to addiction. (2)

Both the firsthand and secondhand smoke produced by waterpipe use contain known carcinogens at levels equal to or greater than that of other tobacco products. People who are exposed to waterpipe smoke are at risk of the same negative health outcomes as individuals exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke even if only herbal waterpipe products are used. Canadian research has revealed that the non-tobacco, or "herbal" shisha products used in waterpipes produce toxic air pollutants, including CO, volatile aldehydes, and polyaromatic hydrocarbons.

Research has also found toxic trace metals and carcinogens at levels equal to or greater than those in cigarettes in three raw herbal shisha products tested. These findings are consistent with the findings of other researchers. (3)

Hookah bars are unsafe workplaces there are no safe level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke including waterpipe smoke.

Research has shown that secondhand waterpipe smoke contains, fine and ultrafine particulates, carbon monoxide (CO) polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), volatile aldehydes, phenolic compounds, and other cancer-causing agents. Smoke from a single waterpipe session can emit four times the carcinogen PAH, four times the volatile aldehyde and 30 times the CO of a single cigarette.(4)

Health Impacts continued and health misconceptions

Often marketed as being safer than traditional cigarettes, waterpipe smoking has become a popular alternative to cigarettes in North America. Studies estimate that a waterpipe smoker may inhale as much smoke in a one-hour session as someone who inhaled 100 or more cigarettes.

Many waterpipe users incorrectly believe it is less harmful and less addictive than other forms of tobacco use. In reality, depending on the product and smoking pattern of the user, waterpipe use can expose the user to significant levels of nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar, and other heavy metals.

Another common misconception is that the water in the waterpipe removes the toxins from the smoke which is incorrect. The water simply cools the smoke, allowing the use to inhale more deeply and absorb more of the toxins into their lungs.(5)

Why ventilation is not enough.

While properly designed and operated ventilation systems can reduce levels of pollutants, ventilation is not an option because a ventilation system with the technology to eliminate all secondhand smoke does not exist.(6)

The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) is a global authority on ventilation systems. In July 2020, ASHRAE effectively abandoned its guidelines for designing “safe” smoking rooms and concluded, “all smoking activity inside and near buildings should be eliminated, which is supported by the conclusions of health authorities that any level of ETS exposure leads to adverse health effects.” If a waterpipe venue is part of a multi-unit building, people in adjacent units may also be adversely affected by drifting smoke.(7)

The charcoal used to heat waterpipes adds additional health risks as it produces high levels of CO, metals, and cancer-causing chemicals. (8)

Canada uses an Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)(11) to help the public understand what ambient air quality means to their health. It measures ambient air quality in relation to health on a scale from 1 to 10 and the higher the number, the greater the health risks. Studies have shown that many establishments allowing waterpipe smoking would often be ranked “10”, indicating that the air in these establishments represents a potentially hazardous exposure. (9)

Air quality testing of shisha establishments in Calgary found poor air quality in two-thirds of lounges based on the levels of CO exceeding recommended health guidelines (9 ppm ASHRAE).

Similarly, air quality testing of Toronto waterpipe cafes at a time when tobacco smoking was banned, but herbal non-tobacco waterpipe smoking was not, found that the staff and patrons of these cafes were exposed to air quality levels considered hazardous to human health. (10)

Public bans on hookah lounges

The best practice, as recognized globally by the World Health Organization, is a ban on hookah in any place where smoking is banned.

Because all second-hand tobacco smoke has the potential to cause death, disability and disease, waterpipes should be included with cigarettes in clean indoor air policies. Waterpipe cafés or lounges should not be exempt from clean indoor air legislation.(11)

Public support for banning hookah lounges is high in Manitoba. A public opinion survey commissioned in 2019 by the Alberta Policy Coalition for chronic disease prevention in both Alberta and Manitoba found that of 1,909 Manitoban respondents aged 18 and over; 80 percent of respondents supported a ban on the use of waterpipes in all public places where tobacco use is banned. (12)

Public bans on hookah lounges continued

The trend across Canada has been to ban all waterpipe smoking in public places, including non-tobacco "herbal" hookah smoking. Eight provinces and territories prohibit smoking of all waterpipe products, including herbal non-tobacco waterpipe products, in places where smoking is banned including:

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Municipalities with public hookah bans:

Ontario: Toronto, Ottawa, Peel Region, Windsor, Barrie, Orillia, and Peterborough.

British Columbia: Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Burnaby, and Vancouver.

Alberta: Edmonton, Airdrie, Red Deer, and ten other Alberta municipalities.(13)

Global trends of public hookah bans:

Waterpipe smoking in public settings has been banned in several Middle Eastern countries where it has been smoked for centuries like **Syria, Lebanon**, **Turkey**, and **Jordan.**

The **East African** nations such as **Tanzania, Rawanda**, and **Kenya** have banned smoking of waterpipe based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) concerns about its lethal effects on human health. (14)

Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, and the India states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Punjab have also banned hookah bars and lounges.

Many countries in the **Middle East** including **Saudi Arabia**, and **Kuwait** have imposed bans on waterpipe use to curb the spread of communicable diseases.

The cities of **Abu Dhabi** and **Dubai** in **United Arab Emirates, Cairo, Egypt**, and **New Delhi**, India also recently banned hookahs at cafes and restaurants as a precaution against the spread of communicable diseases. (15)

A comprehensive ban on public waterpipe will:

1) Protect citizens and workers from the negative health effects of secondhand smoke exposure in public places and workplaces,

2) Create awareness regarding the harmful effects of waterpipes, thus, making hookah smoking less appealing to youth and young adults; and

3) Reduce the complications and costs associated with creating ventilation "solutions" that are inherently ineffective.

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