January 16, 2024

City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1B9

Dear City Councillors,

I am writing to you on behalf of Heart & Stroke, Manitoba, in support of hookah lounge regulation in Winnipeg. It is Heart & Stroke's position that hookah lounges in the city should be regulated in a manner consistent with other controlled substances such as tobacco and cannabis that produce negative health effects through indoor smoke inhalation and resulting health risks. This would mean a complete ban on hookah lounges in the city of Winnipeg.

Recommendations from the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) state that waterpipe tobacco is included within all tobacco products regulated in the policy.[1] According to both Health Canada and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.[2] Secondhand smoke contains toxins that pose significant health risks especially to those with underlying health conditions including heart disease. Secondhand smoke from hookah pipes is just as harmful as secondhand smoke from cigarettes.[3]

This is in part why the World Health Organization recommends a ban on all waterpipe smoking in workplaces and public places. Similarly, the practice has been banned in over thirty municipalities in Canada along with Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland & Labrador, Nunavut, Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, dating as far back as 2008.[4]

While proper ventilation can reduce levels of pollutants from hookah smoke, ventilation alone is not a strong enough measure since the removal of all second hand smoke is not only costly but impossible.[4] Any amounts of second hand smoke from hookah can contribute to negative health consequences for those exposed at levels similar to or greater than tobacco smoke.[4]

Heart & Stroke therefore supports a comprehensive ban on hookah lounges in order to protect both the health of the public, establishment patrons and those who work in the service industry. A ban will also serve to create awareness of the negative health effects of hookah, thereby deterring the younger generation from initiation and reducing the negative public health effects of smoking.

Kind regards,



Christine Houde
Director, Health Policy & Systems
Heart & Stroke (Manitoba)

References:

1. World Health Organization – Factsheet: Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking & Health https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/179523/WHO_NMH_PND_15.4_eng.pdf
2. Health Canada. Dangers of Second-Hand Smoke. May 2015 https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/avoid-second-hand-smoke/second-hand-smoke/dangers-second-hand-smoke.html
3. Hammal F; Chappell A; Wild TC; Kindzierski W; Shihadeh A; Vanderhoek A; Huynh CK; Plateel G;Finegan BA;, F. (2013, October 15). 'herbal' but potentially hazardous: An analysis of the constituents and smoke emissions of tobacco-free waterpipe products and the air quality in the cafés where they are served. Tobacco control. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24128428
4. Campaign For a Smoke Free Alberta. *Regulating Waterpipe Smoking in Public Establishments and Workplaces*. February 2021.