



HL 29.1.6

Deputation Presentation to: City of Toronto, Board of Health

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Good afternoon, my name is Ibrahim Malik and I am a Toronto resident and Canadian Cancer Society volunteer.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about why I support the Toronto Medical Officer of Health's recommendations on the report regarding the Health Risks of Indoor Waterpipe Smoking. Regulating the use of indoor waterpipe smoking will benefit the health of our community by strengthening protection against second hand smoke, increase public awareness of its health effects, prevent youth smoking and will continue to reduce social acceptability of smoking in public places.

Tobacco use is directly responsible for one in three of all cancer deaths and 85 per cent of lung cancer deaths. The need for increased tobacco control is still great. Today over two million Ontarians smoke, thousands more start every day, and every year approximately 13,000 Ontarians will die from tobacco use ... that's 35 people every day.

There are many misconceptions surrounding hookah smoking and the health risks associated with its use. Common misconceptions include users believing it is less harmful than cigarette smoking because the smoke is filtered through water or that herbal shisha is less harmful



than tobacco shisha. These myths need to be dispelled. Any measures to regulate the indoor use of waterpipes at commercial establishments should be complemented with strong public awareness and education initiatives.

Waterpipes are frequently used in social settings and are growing in popularity especially among adolescents and young adults. At present, there are no age restrictions for hookah lounges, which make these spaces more accessible and appealing to youth. In addition to easy access, shisha that is candy or fruit flavoured is also more appealing to youth.

Shisha has the “cool factor” for youth looking to experiment with smoking and tobacco products. Some of our youth volunteers from York University have expressed concern about the increase of waterpipe use in outdoor venues on post-secondary campuses during “welcome week” for first year students. This occurs at a delicate time in a young adult’s life where they are looking to fit in and have a sense of belonging in a new community. Shisha is often viewed as glamorous, provokes curiosity and is seen as an exotic “cultural experience” for some youth.

Currently, hookah lounges are able to get around the Smoke-Free Ontario Act by claiming that their shisha is herbal, tobacco-free and that it is heated, not lit. Establishments often also blend their own shisha or use poorly labelled products. This makes it difficult for both the smoker and tobacco enforcement officers to know whether or not



the shisha contains tobacco. A ban on smoking waterpipe indoors, both herbal and tobacco, would help solve this problem and make enforcement easier. The recommendations included in this report provide Toronto the ability to explore joining the fifteen municipalities across Canada that have already banned hookah in indoor public spaces.

Being a public issues volunteer gives me the ability to use my voice to help affect change. I, and the Canadian Cancer Society, encourage the Board of Health to adopt the important recommendations outlined in this report.

Indoor waterpipe smoking creates a challenge in our efforts to reduce smoking rates, exposure to second hand smoke and the social acceptability of tobacco-use and smoking, especially amongst youth.

As I conclude today, youth volunteers in Toronto and province-wide are at implementing a youth-led tobacco industry denormalization campaign by raising awareness amongst their peers and empowering them to speak up and support a ban on flavoured tobacco in Ontario. If the board adopts the recommendations today our Canadian Cancer Society youth would be more than willing to provide insight and feedback regarding hookah/shisha use among their peer groups.

Thank you for your time. Together we can continue to make progress towards a truly smoke-free Ontario.