



## ADDRESSING HOOKAH (WATERPIPE) USE IN TORONTO

Presentation to Toronto Board of Health  
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Michael Perley  
Director  
Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board of Health,

On behalf of the partners of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the excellent staff report before you, "Hookah (Waterpipe) Use in Licensed Establishments," in Toronto.

#### Founding Agencies

Canadian Cancer Society  
Ontario Division

Heart and Stroke  
Foundation of Ontario

Non-Smokers'  
Rights Association

Ontario Medical Association

Evidence of the physical and societal dangers of the use of both tobacco-based and non-tobacco waterpipe smoking has been accumulating for several years. The report clearly demonstrates that that evidence has now reached a point where urgent action is required.

Our own research and that of our partners – in particular the Non-Smokers' Rights Association/Smoking and Health Action Foundation – confirms the report's conclusions:

- Any type of shisha combustion, whether herbal or non-herbal, creates serious health risks for users and for those exposed to second-hand emissions;
- Despite some claims that only herbal product is offered in many Toronto establishments, research has identified airborne nicotine in some of these establishments;
- Hookah use is linked to subsequent cigarette smoking in adolescents;
- Many young people believe hookah smoking is less harmful than cigarette smoking;
- Visible hookah use strengthens the apparent normalcy and acceptability of smoking;
- And finally, use of flavoured shisha is widespread.

Taken together, these conclusions should be more than enough for the City to initiate immediate action. Some, however, may suggest that the Ontario government should be legislating in this area. Recent developments make this unlikely.

As you are no doubt aware, Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, which enacts various amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, received Royal Assent in the provincial Legislature on Thursday of last week.

As the report before you states, one section of Bill 45 will allow enforcement personnel to take samples of material being smoked in hookahs, in order to test for the presence of tobacco. This approach, however, while better than what we have had, is only a modest first step in preventing the broad range of impacts from all types of shisha on individuals in dozens of Toronto establishments.

At the Committee hearings on Bill 45, we raised the need to prohibit the smoking of all forms of shisha province-wide. An amendment was proposed by NDP MPP France Gelinis to include

#### Supporting Agencies

Association of Local  
Public Health Agencies

Cancer Care Ontario

Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

Ontario Association of  
Naturopathic Doctors

Ontario Federation of Home  
and School Associations

Ontario Physical and Health  
Education Association

Ontario Public Health  
Association

Physicians for a  
Smoke-Free Canada

Registered Nurses  
Association of Ontario

The Ontario College  
of Family Physicians

150 Bloor Street West  
Suite 900  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 3C1

t: 416.340.2992

f: 416.340.2995

email: ocat@oma.org

www.ocat.org

this prohibition in Bill 45. Unfortunately, Ms. Gelinas' amendment was ruled out of order because the Smoke-Free Ontario Act – which Bill 45 amends – can only regulate “tobacco” and “tobacco products”. Testing for the presence of tobacco is as far as the provincial government can go under the present legislation.

Bill 45 also bans flavouring agents – such as fruit and candy flavours – in all tobacco products, whether combustible or smokeless. While this section of Bill 45 will prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco-based shisha in retail stores such as specialty tobacconists, the same testing procedure I described earlier will have to be applied to any shisha being smoked in bars, cafes, night clubs or restaurants, in order to determine whether the shisha, if flavoured, contains tobacco. The Bill's flavourings ban will therefore be of limited usefulness in addressing the multiple impacts of hookah/shisha smoking in Toronto.

The Ontario Campaign endorses the approach recommended by Toronto Public Health. We look forward to working with the Licensing and Standards Committee later this month to ensure that the existing epidemic of disease and death caused by tobacco products is not worsened by the continued smoking of shisha in Toronto establishments.

Thank you.