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Good afternoon members of Toronto Board of Health,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. My name is Sarah Butson and this is my colleague Chris Yaccato. We are here today to represent the Ontario Lung Association, which supports the recommendations put forward by the Medical Officer of Health calling for the prohibition of hookah use in licensed establishments. I hope to use my opportunity today to emphasize that unregulated hookah establishments undermine our good work in supporting a smoke free Ontario. I'll also highlight waterpipe's rising popularity, direct and indirect health impacts, and what others are doing to address this.

While I'm here today to represent the Lung Association, as a citizen of Toronto I also have a vested interest in this issue. I went to university when you were allowed to smoke in doors. In fact to pay my tuition I worked as a waitress, often in the smoking section of a restaurant. We would take 'fresh air' breaks and I remember coming home smelling of smoke. I cringe to think about the potential impacts on my lungs from having worked in those conditions. When legislation was passed it was a relief – and the restaurant industry stayed strong. Fast forward a few years, I'm a mother and now live on the Danforth in where in a one block stretch there are, at last count, 3 places with smoking inside. I am appalled that waitresses in these establishments are facing the same hazardous working conditions today. We've faced these challenges before; seen the impact on workers of these establishments before – but yet this issue is creeping up again in another form.

Where we have done an incredible job regulating and protecting citizens from exposure related to cigarette smoke, hookah establishments remain a glaring gap. Ten years ago the World Health Organization identified waterpipe use as a serious potential health hazard. Waterpipe smoke contains nicotine, carbon monoxide, carcinogens, and may contain greater amounts of tar and heavy metals than cigarette smoke. This smoke is delivered in heavy doses. In a typical hookah session, a user consumes about 100 to 200 times the volume of smoke compared to a cigarette.

There is a real need, as indicated in the report, for widespread public education on this issue to dispel myths around health effects of hookah use. Most users believe hookah is safe, especially young people where it is rising in popularity. Enticing flavours like white gummy bear, pineapple, and double apple are a draw for this crowd. In fact a recent study by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) found that there has been a rise in hookah use amongst young Canadians. In 2006, 6% of 15-19 year olds had used hookah and 11% of 20-24 year olds. As of 2013 these numbers have risen to 14 and 29% respectively. This means that almost 1/3 of young adults in Canada are using hookah.

Its popularity may be in part due to the fact that it is often used as a social activity, which poses additional health concerns beyond inhaled smoke. A single mouthpiece is often used, which can increase the risk of transmitting communicable diseases such as herpes, mononucleosis, tuberculosis, and hepatitis amongst others.

The effects of hookah do not stop at the individual user but pose significant air quality concerns. Carbon Monoxide levels inside hookah cafes have been found to be 89 times higher than outdoors and spending 2 hours in a hookah café is equal to smoking 10 cigarettes. Additionally the exposure to fine particulate matter, which is inhaled deep into the lungs, is alarmingly high. Ontario's Air Quality Index indicates that measures over 91 ug/m^3 (Micrograms per Cubic Meter of Air) have possible serious respiratory effects – a forest fire for instance is 250 ug/m^3 and the indoor air of a hookah café is 1400 ug/m^3 .

In Toronto you can walk into a hookah establishment, pick your flavour, and smoke in-doors. This is one area where we are failing to protect workers, the general public, and youth from exposure to serious health hazards.

Significant progress has been made worldwide. Many Middle Eastern countries, including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have enacted bans or restrictions on hookah. In Canada, 3 Provinces (Alberta, Quebec, and Nova Scotia) and over 10 municipalities regulate hookah use. Toronto, and the province of Ontario, have been leaders in taking progressive steps to ensure the next generation does not smoke, including the recent passage of Bill 45, the Making Healthy Choices Act. The absence of any regulation on hookah use, however, undermines this progress. It is critical that Toronto, a world class city, continues to assert itself as a leader in protecting the health of its citizens through supporting this call for a ban on hookahs.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Butson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sarah Butson