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Campaign to tout tap water falters in fluoridation flap

BY JEFF OUTHIT, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO — You won't hear radio spots promoting tap water this summer, and you won't see a water wagon at Waterloo events promoting tap water over bottled water.

Fluoridation critics have derailed large parts of a regional campaign meant to encourage people to drink tap water, after persuading politicians that such a campaign is unfair while an Oct. 25 fluoride referendum is underway in Waterloo.

Promoting tap water as safe is "not a neutral stance," fluoridation critic Robert Fleming said.

Waterloo council agreed Monday that touting tap water as safe could be criticized by people who want fluoride removed from the water supply.

"I do think it's bad timing," Coun. Karen Scian said. She worries that complaints about the regional tap water campaign could undermine the validity of the referendum outcome. "In 2010, it is not appropriate for us to participate," she said.

Ontario law requires local governments to maintain a neutral stance on water fluoridation until the public votes on the practice.

The public health department says fluoridation is a safe way to reduce cavities, but some critics disagree.

Concerns about neutrality have persuaded regional government not to conduct a radio campaign touting tap water while the fluoride referendum is underway.

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