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## City council passes off debate to regional officials

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Published on Sep 30, 2009

The fluoride debate erupted in council chambers Monday as the city distanced itself from the issue and the upcoming vote.

After hearing delegations from people on both sides of the issue, councillors voted to work with the region to facilitate debate over the fluoride question, which will be posed to voters in November 2010.

What the city won't do is provide its own information on the matter or devote staff resources to the debate right away, as proposed by Coun. Angela Vieth.

Instead, the city will look to the Region of Waterloo for guidance and take their lead on the matter.

"I don't think it is the place of the City of Waterloo to provide information," said Coun. Mark Whaley.

Aside from a few holdouts, councillors backed away from the debate.

"This will be up to the people of Waterloo to decide," said Coun. Ian McLean. "The city does not want to do anything but facilitate. We do not want to judge the information on this"

Whaley wants to see the debate move to broader public. "When will it be appropriate for this debate to move out of council chambers?" he asked.

The city's responsibility is only to provide a venue for debate, not guide the discussion, he added.

Plus it's the region who decides whether or not fluoride is in the city's water supply. The city just delivers it.

The fluoride issue has been a thorny and complicated one ever since it surfaced last year, when local opponents began to question the use of fluoride in Waterloo's water.

They particularly opposed the source of the fluoride, hydrofluorosilicic acid, which they say has significant health dangers.

Some councillors agree with those concerns. Vieth chastised her colleagues for abdicating responsibility. "We're responsible for the health of our community," she said.

Coun. Diane Freeman proposed turning off the fluoride until a vote was held. She has been in contact with other municipalities and says the move across the board is to stop the fluoride. "I haven't spoken to another municipality that has either allowed fluoride or not removed it."

Council will now wait to hear from the region for some direction. It is unlikely that information sessions will begin by January, but that planning will be underway at that time, said Coun. Karen Scian.

Ultimately, council's decision could mean nothing if the region ignores their plea for help. "It's a very complicated issue," said Mayor Brenda Halloran.

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