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Critics of fluoride say referendum question is no good

BY TERRY PENDER, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO — Opponents of adding fluoride to drinking water do not like the proposed question for this fall's referendum on whether to continue the practice in this city.

After parsing many different versions, staff at the Region of Waterloo, which is responsible for the treatment of drinking water in this area, want this question on ballots in Waterloo for the Oct. 25 municipal elections: "Should the Region of Waterloo continue to fluoridate your municipal water?"

A regional committee will consider the question Tuesday. If approved a public meeting is scheduled for March 9 to hear feedback.

A couple of the people who sought the referendum in the first place do not like the proposed question.

Waterloo Coun. Angela Vieth, said the question does not give people enough information about what is currently going into their drinking water in the efforts to fight tooth decay.

Vieth said: "If I were wording this, this is what I would say: 'Should the Region of Waterloo continue to add hydrofluorosilicic acid containing contaminants of arsenic, lead and mercury to your drinking water? Yes or no?'"

Vieth said the region's proposed question fails "absolutely" to convey what's happening now.

"I believe that people need to know the product that is being added to the water that they drink every day," Vieth said.

"It's an inorganic product that contains arsenic, lead and mercury. And I just don't understand how our council can condone adding this to the water our constituents drink. It baffles me," Vieth said.

There are several other versions that were rejected by staff, but could be adopted by regional councillors, such as:

Do you support the continued fluoridation of your municipal water?

Should the Region of Waterloo fluoridate your municipal water?

Are you in favour of the Region of Waterloo continuing to fluoridate your municipal water?

Do you support fluoridation of the municipal (drinking) water (supply)?

Do you support the continued fluoridation of your public water supply?

Regional staff say the question should make it clear the water is now fluoridated and that the region does it.

Robert Fleming of the citizens' group WaterlooWatch does not like the proposed question either.

"Why not ask the real question, looming for decades but never spoken aloud? Should the region continue adding hydrofluorosilicic acid containing inorganic fluoride and traces of arsenic, mercury, lead in your municipal drinking water? That's the real question," Fleming said.

Regional staff say the proposed question was developed under the terms of the Municipal Elections Act.

"The ballot question must be clear and must be neutral," Fleming said.

"The question being suggested by staff is biased and not fully disclosing of what citizens will be asked to vote on," Fleming said.

For decades fluoride has been added to the drinking water in Waterloo in an effort to prevent tooth decay. It is not added to the water in Kitchener.

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