

# Critics want new fluoride question

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*Chronicle Staff*

The Region of Waterloo should spell out exactly what it's using to fluoridate the water in Waterloo, said the overwhelming majority of presenters last week seeking to provide their input on a fall referendum question.

The region's administration and finance committee held a public consultation on the proposed

question at council chamber and offered up their preferred ballot question — Should the Region of Waterloo continue to fluoridate your municipal water. Yes or No?

Of the 11 delegations that responded only a group represented by Waterloo dentist, Dr. Kerr Banduk, a member of the Ontario Dental Association's board of directors, agreed with the region's wording of the proposed question, saying it was simple, direct and to the point.

He was the only one. All the others who spoke found fault with the question and accused it of being biased in favour of continuing water fluoridation.

That charge was lead by Robert Fleming, executive director of WaterlooWatch, who took umbrage with the use of the word fluoridate in the question. He said the science still remains mixed of whether there is any net benefit to fluoridation and there is little research on the effects on humans of hydrofluorosilicic acid, which is used to fluoridate the local water supply.

"By using the term 'fluoridate' in this proposed ballot question you have expressed belief or opinion about purported benefit, and have not remained neutral," said Fleming. "You are also implying that only fluoride is being added into the water, yet this is not the case."

Fleming said trace amounts of arsenic and lead are found in the inorganic fluoride used in the city's drinking water, and that people

should be specifically asked if they would like that practice to continue.

A few speakers later Dr. Banduk responded that those trace elements of arsenic and lead are undetectable in hydrofluorosilicic acid, and are found in almost equal amounts to what already exists in the air, in the ground or in the water.

"The use of words acid, mercury, lead and arsenic are basically fear-mongering," said Banduk, who said his association is prepared to provide scientific support for water fluoridation and will provide forums as the referendum rolls out.

The rest of the delegations went on to speak about their problems with the question.

Waterloo resident Ken Pitt said if words like acid, arsenic and lead scare you the region should come up with a better way of preventing tooth decay.

"If you want me to give you permission to put hydrofluorosilicic acid into my drinking water they you should simply ask me that question," he said. "What are we afraid of, and why are we afraid of putting that on the ballot?"

Dr. Anne-Marie Mingiardi, a local doctor, said that "drinking water" should be added to the ballot so that people understand that they are ingesting hydrofluorosilicic acid.

Staff will take all the submissions and produce a recommendation for the April 6 Administration and Finance committee meeting.