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Exercise the precautionary principle

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There's been a lot of talk about exercising the precautionary principle when deciding how to vote on the water fluoridation question.

Opponents of water fluoridation argue with all of the scientific uncertainty surrounding the use of hydrofluorosilic acid that we should remove it from our drinking water. We shouldn't force the entire population of Waterloo and parts of Kitchener and Elmira to drink it without all of the science.

Here's the quick definition of the principle: The precautionary principle states that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action or policy is harmful, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking the action.

In this case it would argue that putting the industrial byproduct of the phosphate industry into your water without knowing all of its effects on the human body and the wider environment would require you to stop using it.

The proponents for water fluoridation will argue that the research has been done and refer you back to the U. S. in the 1950s, and closer to home here in Brantford as evidence that it has had nothing but benefits in reducing the amount of cavities. Every major health organization from the World Health Organization to Health Canada endorse the practice of water fluoridation as a benefit to public health.

But there is one caveat they always seem to miss. Those original trials were based on naturally occurring calcium fluoride fed communities.

And modern research from China and India are showing with the abundance of fluoride in our food, air and water that steps should be taken to get it out instead of putting more in.

Where are the Canadian studies, or for that matter the U. S. studies since we always piggyback off them, that show adding hydrofluorosilicic acid is safe for long-term ingestion and with no control over dose?

The effects of excessive fluoride are known including concerns about dental fluorosis. That's why even Health Canada has dropped the optimal standard for adding fluoride to the water three times in the last decade. At its current level there's even research that suggests it has no effect on dental caries.

At its optimum, fluoride can prevent half a cavity. That's from StatsCan research comparing populations in Quebec, which on the whole doesn't fluoridate, with Ontario, which does.

Is that a big enough benefit to allow a substance that has trace elements of lead and arsenic into our water? I say No.



Health Canada has also cautioned mothers who formula feed about using fluoridated water. It's a caution I practiced with my own children and I think it might have been the reason why my oldest son stopped being colicky and having cramps.

So it's not essential for kids why do we need it?

The province has also recently announced free dental care for children in lower income families.

Perhaps this is the confounding variable we've all missed. Proper dental care is the most important thing for good oral health.

That's something we can all agree on.

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