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Fluoride foes make their pitch

BY JEFF OUTHIT, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO — Opponents of water fluoridation put their best arguments forward Thursday, hoping to end a long-time practice meant to reduce tooth decay.

A public forum sponsored by a neutral community group drew about 40 people to the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex.

No one stepped forward when invited to defend fluoridation, practised in Waterloo since 1967. A quarter of the audience sported anti-fluoridation T-shirts or buttons.

"We're here. They are not," said Robert Fleming, who's campaigning against the practice.

The forum is building to a referendum Oct. 25 asking: Should the Region of Waterloo fluoridate your municipal water?

Opponents said again Thursday that adding the compound to tap water is unsafe, unnecessary, violates human rights and lacks scientific support.

"I'm living proof that fluoridation is a fraud," said Alice Terpstra, of Toronto, who told the forum that fluoridation has damaged her health.

Dr. Liana Nolan, the medical officer of health, has endorsed the practice as a cheap, safe way to reduce cavities. "She does not know what she's talking about," Fleming told the forum.

Most Ontario tap water is fluoridated. Leading health organizations endorse it.

Fluoridation proponents participated in a June debate and plan their own information forum next month.

Waterloo, St. Jacobs, Elmira and part of Kitchener are the only local communities with fluoridated tap water. Waterloo residents have twice endorsed it by referendum.

Community group Wonderful Waterloo plans another fluoride forum Oct. 7 at the recreation centre, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

jouthit@therecord.com

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