



Fluoride foes say proposed question is biased, incomplete

BY BRENT DAVIS, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO REGION — A proposed referendum question on fluoridating Waterloo's drinking water is misleading and biased, speakers told regional councillors Tuesday night.

A question on continuing the practice will be included on the ballot in this fall's municipal election. It would only be posed in places where fluoride is added to the municipal water supply — the city of Waterloo, portions of Woolwich Township including Elmira and St. Jacobs, and small portions of Kitchener and Wilmot Township.

But the devil appears to be in the details.

The wording of the preferred question, selected by the region's administration and finance committee — "Should the Region of Waterloo continue to fluoridate your municipal water?" — met with stiff opposition at Tuesday's public meeting.

Chair Tom Galloway told speakers the meeting concerned only the wording of the question, and not the merits of fluoridation.

Critics argued the proposed question fails to specify the local method of fluoridation — namely, that hydrofluorosilicic acid is added to the water supply.

The acid is "a toxic byproduct of the fertilization industry," said Waterloo resident Robert Falla, containing arsenic, lead and mercury.

"This ballot question affects people's health," said Waterloo's Robert Fleming. The preferred question "misses an important and necessary opportunity to clearly address the facts," he said.

"The problem with the proposed question is that the wording is an oversimplification, and as such, distorts the issue," said Waterloo city Coun. Angela Vieth.

"It is important to be forthright with the public," argued Waterloo's Deb Swidrovich. "What is there to hide?"

Those opposed also said using the word "continue" is biased "and encourages people to vote for the status quo," said Waterloo resident Randy Taylor.

Family doctor Anne Marie Mingiardi proposed the question be revised to: "Do you agree with the Region of Waterloo adding fluoride in the form of hydrofluorosilicic acid to your municipal water (drinking water)?"

The lone voice supporting the preferred question came from Dr. Kerr Banduk, a Waterloo dentist and a member of the Ontario Dental Association's board of directors, who said his comments reflected the opinion of other dental professionals in attendance.

The proposed question, Banduk said, "is simple, it is direct and it is to the point." He described the current method of fluoridation as the safest, most cost-effective strategy.

"The use of the words acid, mercury, lead and arsenic are basically fear-mongering," he said, describing the amounts of those substances present in the process as "undetectable."

The administration and finance committee will consider input from Tuesday's speakers before firming up the recommended wording at its April 6 meeting. That recommendation will then go to regional council on April 14.

bdavis@therecord.com