



## Fluoride officially turned off

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Published on Nov 30, 2010

Region of Waterloo officials turned off the fluoride Monday and started the process of decommissioning the equipment that has been used to fluoridate the city's water for more than 40 years.

As of 11:52 a.m. Monday morning, the final fluoride tap — located on William Street across from Willis Way — was turned off, according to Nancy Kodousek, director of water services for the region.

"All the systems are now off," Kodousek said.

Regional water staff could be seen working out of the fluoridation facility on the east side of the William Street pumping late Monday morning.

Workers wore gas masks, protective coveralls and hard hats as they entered the facility. A large pump truck was also present, as workers emptied the chemical tanks.

A chemical called hydrofluosilicic acid has been used to fluoridate water. The region is now left with a surplus of the chemical. The municipality will return any leftover hydrofluosilicic acid to the chemical supplier, Kodousek said.

"Any remaining chemical that we have will be returned to the supplier," Kodousek said. "We are paying to take the chemical back," she said.

"We are not getting any credit." Regional councillors confirmed the end of fluoridation at a meeting last week.

Voters rejected fluoride in a tight referendum held during October's municipal election — 50.3 per cent voted to end fluoridation, while 49.7 per cent voted to keep it.

Waterloo city councillor Angela Vieth was on hand Monday to watch the fluoride be turned off, though she couldn't actually enter the site due to safety concerns.

It was "a very satisfying ending" for Vieth, who was vocal in her opposition to fluoride.

Watching regional staff in protective gear around the chemicals "hit home," Vieth said.

"This is toxic waste, it doesn't need to be in our drinking water," she said.

"Now people have a personal choice as to whether they want to ingest fluoride." Local dentists have a different take. Twice in the last two weeks, representatives from the Waterloo-Wellington Dental Society and the Ontario Dental Association went to regional council to request that water fluoridation continue.

The dentists argued that the referendum was too close to call and that their expert opinions were being ignored. The region is now developing a new oral health strategy and plans to do a study on the effects of the removal of fluoride.



Workers turn off the fluoride pump at the William Street pumping station.

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