
Fluoride shutdown expected Nov. 29

BY JEFF OUTHIT, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO REGION — Regional government plans to stop adding fluoride to Waterloo drinking water at noon on Nov. 29.

Fluoride has been added to tap water since 1967, as a public health measure meant to prevent cavities.

Residents voted by a slim margin last month to end the practice, 50.3 per cent to 49.7 per cent. This would bring Waterloo in line with Kitchener and Cambridge, which do not fluoridate tap water. Elmira, St. Jacobs and a small part of Kitchener are also poised to shed fluoride.

Although the referendum against fluoride is not binding, councillors meet Tuesday to consider a proposed bylaw to end fluoridation. It's based on council's resolution to respect the majority referendum vote.

If endorsed Tuesday, the bylaw would get final approval Nov. 24, followed by a fluoride shutdown five days later at four water treatment sites. The shutdown is estimated to cost \$50,000.

Most Ontario tap water is fluoridated. The practice is endorsed by more than 90 health and medical associations.

However, critics dispute assertions that it is safe and effective. They contend the chemical used to fluoridate water is a threat and allege risks including cancer, bone disease and dental damage.

"It's high time this is turned off," said Robert Fleming, a Waterloo resident who helped lead the No campaign to end fluoridation.

Dentists warn of a rise in tooth decay in Waterloo. They argue the weight of credible science strongly shows that adding fluoride strengthens tooth enamel with no known risks, at recommended levels.

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