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Keep the fluoride debate focused on facts

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Robert Fleming is overstating things when he says he is surprised and disappointed that the City of Waterloo and region have not conducted “reams” of scientific research into the benefits of fluoridating local drinking water in last week’s story “Watchdog group is disappointed by lack of information on fluoridation.”

Reams of provincial, national and international research on water fluoridation already exists, mostly supporting, but in some cases recommending against the practise.

There is no reason for anyone to imagine we are so unique that the findings of all those existing studies would not be replicated here. There is nothing that would suggest that our local governments should conduct their own research and certainly nothing that would justify the cost.

Does Fleming also assume that the city and region have conducted reams of independent local research into the benefits of vaccinating children against mumps, immunizing the elderly against the flu or delivering many public health services?

Or does he accept, as most citizens and taxpayers would, that it is reasonable and prudent for our local governments to be guided by the body of research that already exists? After all, one of the main purposes of scientific research is to discover information that has widespread validity and application.

The practice of drinking water fluoridation is of concern to some people, so a public debate and referendum on it is appropriate.

But let’s keep the debate focused on facts and not get distracted by silly attacks on our local governments.

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