



# Water bottle ban just a cover

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In a unanimous counterstrike against 46 per cent of local consumers who won't or can't drink tap water, Waterloo Region recently banned bottled water sales at their facilities.

It's strategic to posture solidarity, disregard those who challenge water quality, and seize back water market share -- all in one political move.

Coun. Jane Mitchell of Waterloo said, "The Region of Waterloo sells tap water, that's what we do."

Mitchell also said, "Our tap water is very good quality -- if we're selling bottled water in our buildings, what are we saying to the public?"

The Region is responsible for water supply and treatment, while our municipalities and townships are responsible for water distribution.

However, the Region's 1990 water services by-law says, "The Regional Corporation does not guarantee the supply or quality of water and failure to supply water shall not be considered as neglect on the part of the corporation."

If the corporation does not guarantee water quality, how are councillors able to do so? Can we believe water quality is good and safe, if the politicians say one thing, but their documents disclaim their words?

Amazingly, Waterloo city council just approved their new water services by-law, manifesting a similar disclaimer.

The city is telling us it cannot even guarantee its own water distribution responsibilities related to quality, supply and pressure.

In 1990 the Region reckoned with providing a new waterline into Elmira and St. Jacobs, after local wells became chemically contaminated. The pipeline was fed from Waterloo's interconnected water distribution system. As these two towns waited, bottled water aided them, until new water began to flow their way -- water fluoridated with hydrofluoridic acid, without their knowledge or consent, therefore without a vote. Parts of Kitchener also receive Waterloo's fluoridated water.

In recent e-mail communications between the region and city, obtained under freedom of information, the region responded to the possibility of a fluoridation referendum now by writing, "I can understand that the city only desires to include those individuals in Waterloo, however the Region is left with a dilemma. Will we continue to supply fluoridated water to other areas if Waterloo was to discontinue to their customers? This is especially problematic when these customer's were never asked in the first place."

Ontario's Safe Drinking Water Act, created post Walkerton, maintains that adding contaminants into drinking water is not permitted, regardless of amounts added, and regardless of dilution. It also overrides Ontario's Fluoridation Act. Hydrofluoridic acid is known to contain co-contaminants such as lead, arsenic, mercury and radionuclides.

Had Waterloo council told the region to shut off hydrofluoridic acid, the region says they would have done so. However, the region and Waterloo failed to act decisively, and take responsibility for our water.

Now, we discover both have water service by-law disclaimers about drinking water quality. Notwithstanding attempts at clever wording and loopholes, it is municipalities who are ultimately and legally responsible for what goes into our drinking water. We depend on them to guard our safety.

Public trust and confidence must always be earned, especially when it comes to water quality.

Banning bottled water is a smoke screen, in an attempt to hide from open discussion with all the facts on the table.

# WATERLOOCHRONICLE .ca

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