



WATERLOOCHRONICLE
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Water truck sparks debate on fluoride

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The fluoride debate bubbled up again in council chambers Monday night despite being banned from city hall.

As part of a fall referendum on fluoridation of municipal water, the city has outlawed any debate over the matter in order to remain neutral.

However, a move to license a water trailer from the region allowed the debate to flow back in.

The city's plan was to pay the Region of Waterloo to bring a water trailer — basically a large truck filled with drinking water — to events.

The trailer would be used to give people complimentary drinking water, as well as promote the safety of tap water.

That position violated city hall's own pledge on neutrality, said Robert Fleming, executive director of WaterlooWatch.

He particularly had a problem with the "safe" part. That's precisely what fluoride proponents are arguing against, he said.

"(This is) not a neutral stance on the health and safety of municipal drinking water," he said.

Coun. Karen Scian, a fluoride supporter, agreed.

"There's not much that Mr. Fleming and I agree on," she said. "But I think we need to be very tight, very careful and very purposeful about what we do with water until Oct. 25."

Her comments led to a lengthy, drawn-out debate about the merits of the water trailer.

The city has a responsibility to support the trailer, said Coun. Ian McLean.

"This has nothing to do with that issue (fluoride)," he said. "This is about us signing an agreement to provide water for citizens at specific events. They can choose to use it or not."

Councillors ended up voting to sign the agreement, but not until after the fall election.

That means the water trailer won't be used at any 2010 events, avoiding any perceived conflict, Scian said.

"I don't want someone to march in here on Oct. 26 and be able to say that our process was flawed and they don't accept the results, putting us through four more years of this," she said.

A vote on fluoride is set for the Oct. 25 municipal election.

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