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Waterloo accused of tap-water hypocrisy

BY JEFF OUTHIT, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO — Robert Fleming says city government is hypocritical for using water filters to clean the drinking water at city hall, all the while assuring residents their drinking water is safe.

"It is hypocritical at a minimum for city hall to take care of itself before it takes care of its citizens," said Fleming, a leading critic of water fluoridation. "If there was no concern, they wouldn't need a filtration system."

"We don't think it's a double standard at all," responds David Calder, general manager of corporate services. He said city government is also taking steps to fix dirty water problems in neighbourhoods.

The city installed its water filters in 2008 "to appease" Regina Street tenants who complained about dirty water, Calder said. The system cost \$20,000.

The filters reduce impurities in tap water, making it cleaner than an average bottle of commercial water, city employees have been told. "It has no impact on fluoridation," Calder said.

Fleming disagrees. He's campaigning to end water fluoridation in an Oct. 25 referendum. Fluoridation helps fight cavities and is deemed safe and effective by the medical officer of health.

Fleming said the city would not stop adding fluoride after critics claimed it makes tap water unsafe. Yet the city is using water filters that will remove, for its employees, trace contaminants that concern fluoridation critics, he said.

Local governments tout tap water as the safe, better choice, even though it is the least popular tap water in Canada.

Statistics Canada found in 2006 that just 16 per cent of households drink it straight up. Most residents drink bottled water or treat tap water before drinking it.

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