



Waterloo councillor wants to hold meetings on fluoride

BY LIZ MONTEIRO, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO – Before Waterloo residents can vote on whether to keep fluoride in their drinking water, they need to be informed of its dangers, says a Waterloo councillor.

Coun. Angela Vieth will ask councillors at a meeting on Monday to commit to facilitating public information sessions on water fluoridation.

"The citizens need to be educated," said Vieth, who hopes city staff will set up town hall meetings and open houses on water fluoridation and bring in experts to talk about why fluoride needs to be removed from Waterloo's water.

"People think that the people who want fluoride out of the water are crazy," she said. "There is no evidence that proves it's safe or that fluoride works."

"How can elected officials continue to add toxic waste to our water?" Vieth said.

Vieth wants residents to be prepared in advance of the city plebiscite to be held during the 2010 municipal election. It will be the Waterloo's fourth vote on whether city water should be fluorinated.

The region fluoridates the water in Waterloo and parts of Woolwich Township. Kitchener water doesn't have fluoride, but Cambridge gets natural fluoridation. Fluoride has been in Waterloo's water since 1967.

Under the Fluoridation Act of Ontario, municipalities are allowed to add fluoride, hydrofluorosilicic acid, to drinking water.

Dr. Liana Nolan, medical officer of health for the region, said the position of public health continues to be the same in that water fluoridation is a safe and inexpensive way to reduce cavities.

Reports by public health say the weight of scientific evidence shows that water fluoridation is a safe and effective public health measure and that there are no known health risks with drinking fluorinated water within recommended levels..

"Ultimately the people will vote and they will decide," Nolan said. "We look forward to that."

The issue of water fluoridation has been tackled by many municipalities across the country debating whether putting fluoride in the water is a cost-effective way to prevent tooth decay or whether it's a toxic practice that should be eliminated.

Last year, Hamilton voted to maintain fluoride in its water, but reduced the level from 0.7 to 0.6 parts per million. In the region, public health has said that the levels of fluoride are within the provincial range from 0.5 to 0.8.

Opponents to fluoridation say there is much scientific data to show the negative effects which include cancer, fluorosis, hip fractures and suppressed thyroid function.

Vieth says she's concerned her motion might go no where. She expects her peers won't vote in favour of public meetings organized by the city. Vieth says there will be a cost to have staff organize meetings.

Vieth said she wants to start public information sessions now so that as many people as possible vote on water fluoridation.

Under the Municipal Elections Act, there must be 50 per cent voter turnout and more than 50 per cent of votes must be in favour of the question for the result of a municipal plebiscite to be binding.

But that could be a problem because typically municipal elections have a poor voter turnout.

"The plebiscite amounts to a public opinion poll. It's a non-binding referendum," Vieth said.

Organizations such as the Canadian Dental Association, the Canadian Medical Association and the World Health Organization support water fluoridation.

lmonteiro@therecord.com



reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.thespec.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

