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Waterloo fluoride vote set for 2010

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WATERLOO

Waterloo residents will vote in the 2010 municipal election on whether to keep fluoride in the drinking water.

Regional councillors agreed yesterday to hold a plebiscite in Waterloo. But the results will not be binding on the regional councillors who'll be elected that year.

"Morally they are bound, but not legally," said Coun. Tom Galloway of Kitchener.

Last January, Waterloo council voted to hold a fluoride plebiscite and referred the issue to regional council, which has control over fluoridation.

Yesterday, regional councillors made it clear that the debate over the merits of fluoridation will be held in Waterloo, and not in the regional chambers.

"This is not the venue for the fluoridation debate," Galloway said.

This angered Robert Fleming, a Waterloo resident who wants the region to immediately turn off the fluoridation tap.

"What the region is saying is we will have a plebiscite, but keep the issue out of our chambers and don't expect any help from us," Fleming said in an interview.

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

The public health unit gave regional councillors a Canadian government report, dated March 2008, stating fluoridation prevents tooth decay and there is no scientific evidence of an increase risk of bone or other cancers.

Coun. Jim Wideman of Kitchener suggested the issue go back to Waterloo councillors in case they had "sobering second thoughts" about a plebiscite.

But Coun. Sean Strickland of Waterloo said this would only make the issue s fluoridation more of a "political football."

Waterloo Mayor Brenda Halloran wasn't at the meeting.

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