

Province asked to study fluoridation of water

By Bill Rea

It's time to determine whether fluoridation of the municipal water supply is a good or bad thing, and Peel Regional councillors believe only the Province can do that.

Councillors last week passed a motion calling on the Premier and Minister of Health to undertake appropriate and comprehensive toxicity testing required to assure the public that use of Hydrofluorosilicic Acid (HFSA) in water fluoridation treatments is safe. The Region is also calling on the Province to take legislative responsibility for regulating and administering HFSA in water treatment throughout Ontario, relieving local governments from what is a Provincial responsibility.

The resolution came as council was addressing the minutes of a Feb. 2 meeting of the Regional council's Community Water Fluoridation Committee, and after they heard from two delegations, strongly urging the practice be stopped.

Mark Corlett, CEO of AVT.ca, said a lot of important facts are being withheld from the public, likening the situation to young children learning about Santa Claus's secret. In such cases, he said adults are involved in a conspiracy to sell young children on a certain notion. "That was my first introduction to the concept of a white lie," he remarked.

Corlett cited a study last year from the Harvard School of Public Health that stated children in communities where fluorides are added to their water lost an average of seven points on their IQ scores.

He added using fluoride would save half a cavity per person in a lifetime.

He also said there are concerns this material in the water can be fatal in some cases, pointing out fluorine is the most aggressive element of the Periodic Table. "Even one death is too many," he declared.

"Since when does a stranger get to decide what medicines you should be taking?" Corlett asked council. "There is zero control over the dose."

He drew the comparison to Santa again, calling it a white lie, but water fluoridation is a "big black bold-faced lie."

He said there are politicians and officials who are holding onto these lies for some reason, and he asked council to do the right thing and ask the province to take over the program.

"Please be brave," he appealed. "Please be virtuous. Please do the right thing."

Corlett told Brampton Councillor John Sprovieri he got the half cavity per lifetime figure from Health Canada's former chief dental officer Dr. Peter Cooney.

Council also heard from Brampton resident Christine Massey, a spokesperson for Fluoride Free Peel, who pointed to the problems of dental fluorosis, which has a visual impact on teeth if there's over exposure. She said the Region conducted a study in 2003 of children aged seven to 13, and they found 13 per cent had dental fluorosis.

She also said there was a 2007 study that compared people in fluoridated Brampton and non-fluoridated areas of Caledon.

"There was absolutely no difference in the cavity rates," she declared. "None whatsoever."

"Cease and desist," she added, stating the Region has no business doing this.

Sprovieri commented on the research he's done, recalling mother's milk has .004 parts per million of fluoride, while bottled formula using tap water has .7 parts per million.

"When you're putting fluoride in our tap water, your making the tap water unfit for our infants and there's no warnings to the public," Massey said.

Dr. Eileen de Villa, medical officer of health for the Region, told Sprovieri Health Canada provides warnings to the public.

She added there are communities where natural occurrence of fluoride are high.

Regarding the Harvard study, and citing the difference in concentration between formula and mother's milk, de Villa said staff did present the findings of the Harvard study. They looked at fluoridated communities, and Peel's level would have counted it as a non-fluoridated community. "They were talking about communities where the level is much, much higher."

Brampton Councillor Michael Palleschi had put forth two motions at the committee meeting. One of them called on the Region to host a series of public consultations to get input from residents on the risks and benefits of fluoridation.

The other called on the province conduct the appropriate toxicity testing take responsibility for fluoridation programs.

Palleschi argued last week to have the public consultation delayed until the Province has had a chance to get involved, and put forth the one calling on the Province to take over.

Sprovieri was in favour of that, agreeing it should be a Provincial responsibility, adding the Region doesn't have the means to do toxicology studies.

He also pointed out some 70 per cent of children in Canada don't have fluoride in their drinking water. If it's a benefit, he wondered

why.

Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson said the matter had come up the previous week at a rural municipalities conference. Health and Long-Term Care Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins said fluoridation was one of the best things that had happened in 100 years, and indicated it would be irresponsible to stop the program.

Thompson did state he supported sending the letter to the province.

Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish, who sits on the committee, said they have been hearing contradictory evidence about this, but she favoured asking the Province to get involved.

"This is a good way to force them to actually take over the science of it," she said.

Parish also said a lot of people used to think smoke was good for health, and she said it's time to have a good look at it. "The Province has bundles of money," she declared.

"It is their mandate," Caledon Councillor Annette Groves observed.

But Brampton Councillor Martin Medeiros couldn't support the motion commenting he felt like he would be passing on his responsibilities. He said the Region has good staff providing good information, and it's up to him to make the decision.

Parish responded the committee has worked on this for months, dealing with a variety of nuances.

"It's not been an easy committee, I'll tell you," she said.

Mississauga Councillor Jim Tovey agreed the province should get involved. He said all the Canadian municipalities that don't have fluoridation had staffs that recommended they have it. In all cases, the decisions to get rid of the programs were politically motivated, he added.