

Fluoride to remain in Halton's water system after close vote

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Cooney said the Center for Disease Control estimates every \$1 invested in fluoridation saves \$38 of dental treatment. He said other ways to prevent tooth decay include distributing fluoride toothpaste at a cost of \$3 or topical fluoride treatments at \$30.

All Halton Hills representatives on regional council voted to continue fluoridation.

The Region spends \$268,000 a year or 54 cents per person on fluoridation.

"I will make a lot of money by removing fluoridated water. The thought that there's a world-wide conspiracy is ridiculous," said Dr. Robert Wood, head of dental oncology at Princess Margaret Hospital.

He said removing fluoride from drinking water would result in "the golden age of dentistry."

However, councillors and residents had their doubts.

Burlington Councillor Marianne Meed Ward said she sees adding fluoride to drinking water as a health crisis.

She said factors such as income, education and diet have far more effects on dental health than water fluoridation does.

"In the last several decades water fluoridation has gone up and dental cavities have gone down. But we hear from Health Canada that there's so causation evidence that the two are related. There's no evidence between half of the population (in Canada) that is not fluoridated and half of the population that is, that the half not getting fluoridated water are at a significant risk."

Several residents who addressed council pointed to numerous studies that linked fluoride ingestion with bone cancer, Alzheimer's diseases, skeletal fractures and fluorosis, which causes tooth discolouring.

"The Health Canada report does not assure fluoride is safe or effective. It concludes it does not support a link between water with fluoride and adverse health effects. But Health Canada's own report associates water fluoridation with hip fractures in seniors," said Oakville resident Diane Sprules.

Added Oakville resident Erika Ristok: "It's not regional council's role to play doctor. The Region can recommend getting a flu shot but it's my choice whether to get one or not."

A letter from Oakville MP Terence Young supported removing fluoride from Halton's water. Young said in the last 15 months, 13 Canadian municipalities have stopped fluoridating water. Dur-

ing that same period of time, no communities have started the practice.

However, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Arlene King said the value of fluoridated water shouldn't be underestimated.

Pointing to the City of Dryden, which removed fluoride from municipal water and saw a 26 per cent increase cavities, she said, "I am very concerned about the loss of fluoridated drinking water in

certain communities despite the evidence that it's safe and effective.... it is an important additive for purposes of dental health a great equalizer across the province."

Halton Medical Officer of

Health Dr. Bob Nosal gave an impassioned presentation toward the end of the long day speaking for what he called "the silent majority" who want fluoridation to continue.

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