



OPHA RESOLUTION: Community Water Fluoridation

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Ontario Public Health Association

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OPHA RESOLUTION: Community Water Fluoridation

WHEREAS about 70% of the Ontario population enjoys the benefits of community water fluoridation; **and**

WHEREAS municipalities and Ontario Health Units have been and continue to be faced with determined and persistent efforts to cease community water fluoridation by a small group of committed opponents of fluoridation; **and**

WHEREAS the overwhelming scientific evidence from well recognized and reputable researchers and organizations continues to indicate that community water fluoridation is safe, effective and cost efficient; **and**

WHEREAS community water fluoridation is recognized as an important component of maintaining and improving the oral health of all residents by dental, medical and other organizations provincially, federally and internationally; **and**

WHEREAS national public health organizations from Canada, the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand all endorse community water fluoridation; **and**

WHEREAS the Chief Medical Officer for the province of Ontario, stated that community water fluoridation, "...is an effective public measure that reduces social inequalities in health. It helps to contain the costs of health care in Ontario. It benefits all residents in a community, and for these reasons we fully expect that this important practice will continue for many years to come so that Ontarians can enjoy lasting health benefits".

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OPHA supports the fluoridation of municipal drinking water and recommends water fluoridation as a safe, effective and economical public health measure to prevent dental caries in all age groups.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

The Ontario Public Health Association supports the fluoridation of municipal drinking water and recommends water fluoridation as a safe, effective and economical public health measure to prevent dental caries in all age groups. The Ontario Public Health Association endorses the memorandum, and the accompanying information on community water fluoridation from Dr. David Williams, the Chief Medical Officer (A) for Ontario, dated May 26, 2009.

METHODOLOGY

An internet search was conducted for reviews of community water fluoridation from 1997 to the present. Additional searches were made for the fluoridation and fluoride policies and position statements from Ontario, Canadian and foreign organizations that represent the closest professional affiliation with the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD).

BACKGROUND

Optimizing fluoride levels in the drinking water started in Brantford, Ontario, in 1945 as the initial test city. A comparison of caries prevalence (the number or proportion of persons in the population who exhibit dental caries or decay at any one time) and severity (mean number of carious or decayed teeth per person in the population) in Brantford children to those from Sarnia, which was the non-fluoridated control site over an 11 year period, indicated a 63% reduction in caries severity and a 35% reduction in caries prevalence.¹ Similar results from other countries led to many Ontario municipalities to begin fluoridation in the 1950 and 1960.² Now, about 8.5 million people (70%) in Ontario receive fluoridated drinking water. Fluoride levels are carefully monitored regularly to ensure that the optimal level is maintained as is required under the Ontario Public Health Standards.³

World-wide, the British Fluoridation Society reported that in 2004 about 350 million people had access to optimally fluoridated drinking water including countries such as: the United States, Canada, Argentina, Ireland, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Israel, and the UK. An additional 50 million had naturally fluoridated drinking water at optimal concentrations.⁴

The safety, efficacy and effectiveness of community water fluoridation have been extensively researched for more than 60 years since it was introduced.⁵ Between 1997 and 2007 there were 18 major reviews on fluoridation.⁶⁻²⁶ The most recent are the 2007 reviews by the Health Canada Expert Panel⁹, the Institut national de santé publique du Québec¹¹ and the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia.¹⁷ These reviews have found that:

- fluoridation is safe;
- no evidence has been found that it causes cancer, bone disease, kidney disease, birth defects or other adverse health effects;
- there is no evidence that adding fluoride to the drinking water has negative environmental impact;
- fluoridation is still effective even though other sources of fluoride such as toothpastes and topical fluorides, are used;
- fluoridation benefits all residents served by community water supplies regardless of their social or economic status; and,
- fluoridation is the most cost-effective means of delivering the benefits of fluoride to whole communities.

Through position and policy statements, community water fluoridation is supported by:

the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care;²⁷
the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion;²⁸
the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario;²⁹
the Ontario Dental Association;³⁰
the Ontario Dental Hygienists Association;³¹
the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry;³²
the Government of Canada;¹⁰
Health Canada;³³⁻³⁴
the Public Health Agency of Canada;³⁵
the Canadian Dental Association;³⁶
the Canadian Dental Hygienist Association;³⁵
the Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry;³⁷
the World Health Organization;⁷ and,
the FDI World Dental Federation.³⁹

The list of organizations includes the following national public health associations:

the Canadian Public Health Association;⁴⁷
the American Public Health Association;⁴¹
the UK Public Health Association;⁷
the Public Health Association of Australia;⁴² and,
the Public Health Association of New Zealand.⁴³

These are only a few of the many other dental, medical, health and other organizations around the world that have endorsed community water fluoridation.⁵

Even with overwhelming scientific evidence on the safety and effectiveness of community water fluoridation from many reputable organizations around the world, a small but well organized group of committed anti-fluoridationists persists in pursuing local authorities to stop fluoridation. Since 2007, at least 8 municipalities in Ontario (Aitikokan, Dryden, Halton, Hamilton, Norfolk, Niagara Falls, Tottenham and Waterloo) were challenged to discontinue community water fluoridation. Two of these challenges have led to decisions by city or regional councils to not restart community water fluoridation. Concurrently, the Government of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment have also received several petitions from individuals to cease community water fluoridation.¹⁰

In support of Ontario Health Units, Dr. David Williams, the Acting Chief Medical Officer of Ontario issued a memorandum to all Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health strongly endorsing community water fluoridation. With the memorandum were the supporting scientific evidence and a set of questions and answers regarding fluoridation. This provincial support of fluoridation is welcomed by the members of the OAPHD and in our opinion will be helpful in future debates on the fluoridation issue. The OAPHD therefore urges all associations with an interest in the oral health of Ontarians, including the Ontario Public Health Association to support and endorse community water fluoridation and the memorandum from Dr. Williams.

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Support for Water Fluoridation

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“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Canadian Public Health Association endorse water fluoridation as an effective and safe public health measure which reduces dental caries and urge all relevant international, national, provincial, territorial and municipal authorities to undertake earliest possible implementation of this important public health measure.
...*CARRIED*”
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