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Re: Tecumseh reintroduction of fluoridation of water supply

Dear Mayor McNamara,

I write to you as both a resident of the town of LaSalle and as a dental professional with 34 years of experience in Windsor. I make my comments to you in advance of Tecumseh Town Council's meeting to address the issue of fluoride levels being readjusted in the Town's water supply, and to encourage both council's and your support of this important issue.

To say that this is an emotional, confusing and controversial issue is an understatement. You will be exposed to all kinds of conflicting information. I hope that I can assist you with understanding the issue.

Firstly, it is important to understand that fluoride (F) is safe and is already present in our water at low levels. We are not moving from a state of nothing, to one of its presence. Fluorine is a naturally occurring element in our environment. Fluoridation of the community water supply is the upward adjustment of the levels of fluoride to a therapeutic level that will have a beneficial effect on the enamel of our teeth. That level is 0.7 ppm (0.7mg/L). Thus, F is not a "medicine". It is a mineral found naturally in our environment. The water supply is not being "medicated". People do not have "allergies" or a "sensitivity" to fluoride that endangers their life, as F is always present in our water and in our environment, whether one is aware of it or not.

Of great importance for you and council is to consider who is providing information to you, and the source of that information. I do understand that as politicians you need to consider the viewpoint of all. However, the greatest weight must always lean towards the experts in that field, and the scientific literature from reliable, respected sources of accurate information. Five years ago, when F was removed from the water, many politicians commented that as non-scientists they had difficulty comprehending all the conflicting information brought forward. The experts, like our MOH and the professional dental community, should have been the experts relied upon. The anti-fluoride community, which was very vocal and emotional with their anecdotal stories and scientifically unreliable sources of information, were given equal, if not more weight, than the experts. Over 100 credible scientific and consumer groups support Community Water Fluoridation, including: the Ontario Dental Association, the Canadian Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization, to name a few. Not a single credibly recognized scientific

group in the world OPPOSES community water fluoridation. Please listen to the credible scientific experts that are trained and credentialed in this area.

Dentists in Windsor/Essex County have nothing to gain by the addition of F to the community water supply. I am positive that NO other group comes before council to ask for a change that will actually decrease their income and business, if implemented. The dental community, along with the Health Unit, would prefer to see less dental disease and less oral suffering in our community above their own personal gain. This is why we are advocating for this safe and positive change.

You will be told that “brushing and flossing with fluoridated toothpaste” is equivalent to adding F to the water supply. I wish it were that easy! Dental decay is a very complex infection. Those that should be brushing the most are usually brushing the least, and these are the individuals most susceptible to dental disease. These are the ones that will benefit the most from your positive vote. In addition to community water fluoridation, there are multiple public health measures which can improve oral health: healthy low sugar diet, proper tooth brushing and flossing, regular professional checkups, parental education and involvement, preventive treatments such as fluoride varnish. All are good for teeth and prevent cavities. But fluoridation opponents mistakenly believe these programs can be alternatives to avoid fluoridation.

The substance most widely utilized to fluoridate water systems is hydrofluorosilicic acid (HFA). There are no “waste by-products” involved in water fluoridation. HFA is a co-product of the process which extracts the other co-product, phosphoric acid, from naturally occurring phosphorite rock. Phosphoric acid is used in soft drinks we consume, and in fertilizers used by our farmers, that eventually become incorporated into foods that we eat. The HFA co-product is carefully diluted to a 23% aqueous solution which is then utilized to fluoridate water systems. HFA is not a “poison”, and we don’t consume it directly. When HFA is mixed with water it dissociates and provides the F ion which gets incorporated into the enamel of our teeth.

You will be told that fluoridation causes hypothyroidism, neurotoxicity, lower IQ scores in children, and increased levels of varying cancers. All of these erroneous claims are based on flawed “studies” that have been widely criticized by credible, scientific experts around the world. Anti-fluoridationists will use these claims to induce fear, and have you oppose fluoridation.

You will be told that “dental fluorosis” will destroy the appearance of our teeth. This is a non-issue in Windsor/Essex County. Fluorosis occurs when one is exposed to F levels greater than 2 ppm, which is 3 times the level being recommended for our community. In all of my years of dental practice in Windsor, I’ve never encountered anything beyond the occasional white spot on the enamel of a few individuals. Consultation with my dental colleagues verifies similar observations to mine. The only such fluorosis which may be attributable to optimally fluoridated water is mild to very mild, a barely detectable effect which causes no adverse effect on cosmetics, form, function, or health of teeth. In fact, peer-reviewed science has demonstrated

mildly fluorosed teeth to be more decay resistant, and many consider this effect to not even be undesirable, much less adverse.

You will be told that the Town of Tecumseh will sue and taken to court. What liability? These are attempts to intimidate with lame legal threats. Informed consent is not required for local officials to approve the concentration level of existing minerals in drinking water supplies under their jurisdiction. Consent for them to do their job is conveyed upon election/appointment to office. Frivolous “legal action” by anti-fluoridationists has been soundly rejected by the courts through the decades. No court of last resort has ever upheld the nonsensical arguments with which anti-fluoridationists have constantly wasted court time and resources. In considering the often attempted threat of “legal action” made by anti-fluoridationists, decision-makers must only decide on which side of the issue they would rather find themselves.

I’ve attempted to be thorough and concise with the information presented to help validate your support of this important public health initiative. The benefit to the entire population of Tecumseh from water fluoridation is not an assumption. It is a fact. In addition to the clearly established prevention of a significant amount of very serious dental infection in individuals of all ages, fluoridation saves money for the community by reducing the need for expensive dental and medical procedures, reduced burden on hospital emergency departments and admissions, reduced loss of productivity and absenteeism at work and in school, and reduced costs to taxpayers for public assistance programs such as Ontario Works, ODSP and Healthy Smiles Ontario. There are no “risks” involved with optimally fluoridating water. The risk is with the lifetimes of pain, debilitation, black discoloration and loss of teeth, development of serious medical conditions, and life-threatening infections, which can be, and are, prevented by water fluoridation.

I am happy to clarify any questions or concerns you may have regarding my letter by contacting me via any of the methods listed on my letterhead.

Mayor McNamara, I urge you and your council to SUPPORT fluoridation of the Tecumseh/LaSalle/ Windsor water supply.

Respectfully,

Dr. Domenico Aversa, DDS