

Your Worship and Members of Council.

I am the Executive Director of Family Services Windsor-Essex-- a community agency affiliated with other family service agencies across Canada. We are a multi-service organization whose mandate is to support individuals and families by providing supports, services, resources and tools to assist people to achieve positive mental and physical well-being.

One of the programs we administer on behalf of United Way Windsor-Essex is a Community Emergency Fund. This fund supports residents of Windsor and Essex County to pay for goods and services when there is no other source of funding and the individual cannot afford the good or service. Over the past 5 years of the funds existence, assistance with dental services has remained in the top three items of request. The number of requests for assistance with Oral Health has increased by 300% from 2014 to 2018.

I am not an expert on oral health –the staff at the WEC HU and the local dental association are. I am not an epidemiologist—but the author of the report from the Health Unit before you tonight is. What I am is a competent provider of social services that improve well-being as indicated by the social determinants of health. My work allows me to work with individuals and families that struggle to make ends

meet, and those experiencing poverty. We know that the primary determining factor of poor health is poverty.

As Council is aware, Windsor has one of the highest rates of child poverty in our country. While Council maybe challenged to find ways to address child poverty from the municipal property tax base one thing council can do to address poverty is to return fluoride to our water.

While returning fluoride to our drinking water will not eliminate child poverty—it is one important step that a municipality can take to address this issue. Eliminating child poverty requires a multi-sector, multi-pronged strategy. Our entire community needs to work together. Committing to improving oral health is one way the City of Windsor can contribute to improving the outcomes for kids. Here, is the added bonus, children who don't experience poverty also benefit when there is fluoride in the drinking water.

Tonight I am asking council to employ evidence-based decision-making and to use the information of experts in making an informed decision. Both the WEC HU and the local dental association have unequivocally called for the return of fluoride to our water system. I appreciate how difficult it is for Council to grapple with scientific information, studies and findings when most of us are not trained in science. When we don't know the answer we look to our experts to provide us with an answer. In

this instance the WECHU are the experts. While some would call on the province of Ontario to implement province-wide legislation mandating water treatment, I would remind Council that the province of Ontario does fund the WECHU and has mandated that public health will be monitored by Health Units in Ontario.

Literature on critical thinking states that one of the tenants of a critical thinker is their ability to change their opinion or point of view when new information becomes available to them.

Tonight members of council have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to critically think and support the recommendations of the WEC HU.

Oral health care is about more than simply buying toothpaste and a toothbrush at the drug store— in fact the CDA states that there needs to be a three prong strategy to improve oral health and number one on their list is fluoridation of water.