Dear Minister Hoskins:

Re: A Provincial Approach to Community Water Fluoridation (CWF)

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health supports the advocacy of Mississauga-Streetsville MPP Bob Delaney in his presentation of a private members bill to amend applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province. The attached petition was developed jointly by Bob Delaney and the Ontario Dental Association.

In January of this year the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit drafted an alPHa Resolution calling for a Provincial Approach to CWF, subsequently this resolution was ratified at the alPHa General Meeting. A letter sent to Minister Matthews outlining our resolution is attached.

While the support for water fluoridation continues to be unwavering from the public health community, municipalities in Ontario have been and continue to be faced with determined and persistent efforts to not initiate or to discontinue community water fluoridation by committed opponents of fluoridation.

Public health groups have been advocating for a provincial approach to Community Water Fluoridation since 2007. More recently, in 2011 and 2012 three resolutions to this effect have been passed by Ontario Public Health Association, Public Health Agency, Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario.

In Ontario the responsibility resides with municipal governments to authorize community water fluoridation, under the Fluoridation Act. Yet, jurisdictions that have legislated community water fluoridation at the state, territorial or national level of government have been more effective in providing CWF to their respective municipal populations, with resulting reductions in dental decay.
Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Barry Ward
Chair, Board of Health

BW:CN:mk

Att. (2)

c  Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario
    Association of Local Public Health Agencies
    Ontario Public Health Association
    Local Members of Provincial Parliament in Simcoe Muskoka
    Central Local Health Integration Network
    North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network
    Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario
Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water

WHEREAS fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean, and

WHEREAS scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, and

WHEREAS dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school, and

WHEREAS Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects, and

WHEREAS the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit,

WE the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

THAT the Ministries of the Government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the Province of Ontario.

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Please mail or deliver (do not fax) the original signed petition (no copies) to your Member of Provincial Parliament.
January 15, 2014

The Honourable Deb Matthews
Minister – Minister’s Office
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block
10th Floor
80 Grosvenor St
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews:

Re: A Provincial Approach to Community Water Fluoridation (CWF)

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health commends the leadership demonstrated by the province in its recent commitment to oral health, child wellbeing and poverty reduction through its expansion of Healthy Smiles Ontario. It is important now that such a valuable public health investment be safeguarded through the protection of community water fluoridation.

The practice of water fluoridation has been described as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th Century. The use of fluoride in drinking water is a safe, effective, economical means of preventing dental caries. The studies are clear and unequivocal and the benefits of fluoridation are well documented.

While the support for water fluoridation continues to be unwavering from the public health community, municipalities in Ontario have been and continue to be faced with determined and persistent efforts to not initiate or to discontinue community water fluoridation by committed opponents of fluoridation.

The task of defending water fluoridation at the local level is resource intensive, can extend over long periods of time and draws public health expertise and energies away from other important issues. When public health units are required to advocate at various municipalities concurrently the demand is unmanageable, and too often ends in a loss of community water fluoridation.

Despite the best efforts of boards of health, a substantial number of municipalities in Ontario have discontinued community water fluoridation; over the last five years, this loss has affected almost half a million people (471,590), or almost 4% (3.66%) of Ontario’s population.

In Ontario the responsibility resides with municipal governments to authorize community water fluoridation, under the Fluoridation Act. Yet, jurisdictions that have legislated community water fluoridation at the state, territorial or national level of government have been more effective in providing CWF to their respective municipal populations, with resulting reductions in dental decay.
Public health groups have been advocating for a provincial approach to Community Water Fluoridation since 2007. More recently, in 2011 and 2012 three resolutions to this effect have been passed by Ontario Public Health Association, Public Health Agency, Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario. While these resolutions have raised the profile of CWF as an important public health issue, the resulting action toward a provincial approach has been disappointing.

The Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, at its Board of Health meeting on January 15, 2014, endorsed a resolution (background information attached) advocating for the provincial government to amend regulations of the Safe Drinking Water Act requiring community water fluoridation for all municipal water systems (when source-water levels are below the Health Canada-recommended level of 0.7 mg/L), and that the Province provide the funding and technical support to municipalities required for community water fluoridation.

This resolution is a more strongly and specifically stated call for provincial legislative, financial and technical support to safeguard oral health through community water fluoridation. It is in recognition of the observation that state, provincial, territorial and national governments that have done so, have been more successful in providing fluoridated drinking water to larger percentages of their citizens. It is also in recognition of our experience that without such provincial leadership Ontario is losing fluoridation in many of its communities with an anticipated resulting loss to oral health.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Barry Ward
Chair, Board of Health

BW:CN:cm

Att. (1)

c Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario
Assistant Deputy Minister
Ontario Boards of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Public Health Association
Local Members of Parliament in Simcoe Muskoka
Local Municipal Councils
Central Local Health Integration Network
North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network
Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario