March 18, 2016

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins:

Re: Petition to Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation

I am writing as Chair of the Windsor-Essex County Board of Health in support of changes to Ontario fluoridation legislation-amendments to the Fluoridation Act and the Ontario Municipal Act to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across Ontario (see attached petition).

On December 18, 2014 our Board of Health passed a resolution (see attached) recommending the Province of Ontario amend the regulations of the Safe Drinking Water Act to require community water fluoridation for all municipal water systems (when source-water levels are below the Health Canada-recommended Level of 0.7 mg/L) to prevent dental caries.

Because fluoridation is a safe, equitable, effective and cost-effective way to improve the oral health of everyone in our community, and water fluoridation is effective against dental cavities even when other sources of fluoride, such as toothpastes and topical fluorides are used, I urge you to support mandatory community water fluoridation that will extend this protection to all Ontario residents.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this significant public health issue.

Sincerely,

Gary McNamara, Chairperson
Windsor-Essex County Board of Health

Attachments: Community Water Fluoridation Petition
Windsor-Essex County Board of Health Community Water Fluoridation Resolution

Continued to page 2
Letter to The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins
March 18, 2016

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cc:  The Honourable Bob Delaney, Member, Standing Committee on Justice Policy
     Ted McMeekin, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
     Dr. Bob Bell, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
     Hon. Dipika Damerla, Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
     Martha Greenberg, Assistant Deputy Minister (A), Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
     Sharon Lee Smith, Associate Deputy Minister, Policy and Transformation
     Roselle Martino, Executive Director, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
     Paulina Salamo, Director (A), Public Health Standards, Practice & Accountability Branch
     Laura Pisko, Director, Health Promotion Implementation Branch
     Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario
     The Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Children and Youth Services
     Pat Vanini, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
     Monika Turner, Director of Policy, AMO
     Dr. Vic Kutcher, President, Ontario Dental Association
     Dr. Charles Frank and Dr. Lesli Hapak, Board Members, Ontario Dental Association
     Dr. Edward Socilotto, President, Essex County Dental Society
     Dr. Peter Cooney, Canadian Oral Health Advisor, Public Health Agency of Canada
     Tracey Ramsey, NDP MP for Essex
     Cheryl Hardcastle, NDP MP for Windsor-Tecumseh
     Brian Masse, NDP MP for Windsor-West
     Dave Van Kesteren, MP for Chatham-Kent-Leamington
     France Gelinas, MPP, NDP Critic, Health and Long-Term Care
     Lisa Gretzky, MPP, Windsor West
     Taras Natyshak, MPP, Essex
     Percy Hatfield, MPP. Windsor-Tecumseh
     Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex
     Ontario Boards of Health
     Windsor-Essex County Board of Health
     Dr. Gary Kirk, Medical Officer of Health and CEO, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation

WHEREAS scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation 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, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the Ontario Dental Association, and

WHEREAS recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay, and

WHEREAS the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory, and

WHEREAS the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act,

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

THAT the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Health and Long-Term Care to 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 before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.

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

Bob Delaney
Member of Provincial Parliament
Mississauga-Streetsville
2000 Argentia Road; Plaza 4, Suite 220
Mississauga ON L5N 1W1
Issue:

Community water fluoridation promotes good (oral) health, and the optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water is essential to the health of Ontarians by minimizing tooth decay, and helping restore tooth enamel.

Background:

Dental caries, also known as tooth decay or cavities, is one of the most prevalent chronic diseases in humans. Dental caries affect 60 to 90 per cent of school children and the vast majority of adults in most industrialized countries (World Health Organization, 2003). Among five to seventeen year olds, dental decay is five times as common as asthma and seven times as common as hay fever (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000). In Canada, 57 per cent of children, and 59 per cent of adolescents and 96 per cent of adults have been affected by tooth decay (Health Canada, 2010). In children, early tooth loss caused by dental decay can result in failure to thrive, impaired speech development, absence from and inability to concentrate in school, and reduced self-esteem (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2000).

Oral health care is a critical component of health care and must be included in the design of community programs. The World Health Organization states that oral health is an important part of overall health, and a determinant of quality of life (World Health Organization, 2003). Prevention is critical to good oral health, and tooth decay is almost always easily preventable.

Community water fluoridation is recognized as the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay and was listed by the Centres for Disease Control in the top ten greatest public health achievements of the 20th century. In her report, Oral Health, More than Just Cavities, A Report by Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, April 2012, Dr Arlene King, states that all Ontarians should have access to optimally fluoridated drinking water. “It is my view that the improvements to oral health in Ontario as a result of our publicly funded oral health programs would be undermined by the removal of fluoridation from the water supply” (King, 2012).

From a public health perspective, an advantage of providing fluoride at a population level is that it benefits all residents served by community water supplies (Petersen, 2003). As well water fluoridation does not rely on individual compliance with health recommendations and therefore removes barriers around poor compliance or limited access. Population level intervention ensures all socioeconomic sectors of the population can be reached, notably those with limited access to preventive dentistry. There is mounting evidence for the role of fluoridation in reducing disparities in dental caries (cavities) that are related to the social determinants of health. Fluoridation is highly effective and can reach and benefit large populations. Other preventive services such as fluoridated toothpaste, fluoride mouth rinses, fluoride varnish, and sealants may be less accessible to those without private dental insurance, or those living on low incomes (King, 2012).
Fluoridation of Ontario’s drinking water supplies is a safe and cost-effective and efficient population health intervention. Studies have shown that fluoridated drinking water reduces the number of cavities in children’s teeth by up to 60 per cent and in their permanent teeth by up to 35 per cent (American Dental Association, 2005). As well, a number of studies have shown a positive cost-benefit analysis for community water fluoridation (National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, 2014).

Many major health organizations support community water fluoridation including the WHO, the CDC, Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Dental Association and the Canadian Medical Association. An expert panel convened by Health Canada in 2007 recommended adopting a level of 0.7 mg/L as the optimal target concentration for fluoride in drinking water, which prevent excessive intake of fluoride through multiple sources of exposure. In 2010 Health Canada recommended an optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water of 0.7 mg/L to promote dental health.

Opponents to fluoridation claim it causes harm to individuals. A known health consequence is fluorosis (an alteration of the appearance of the tooth enamel). Other health outcomes suspected to be associated with community water fluoridation have not been supported by the scientific literature. Anti-fluoridation advocacy efforts targeting various Ontario communities are costly in terms of time and resources to city and municipal councils, Boards of Health, MOH’s, public health professionals as well as other dental professionals.

Therefore, let it be moved that:

WHEREAS the relationship between poor oral health and poor physical and mental health is clear; and

WHEREAS the relationship between poor oral health and risks associated with childhood development are known; and

WHEREAS individuals in the community of lower socio-economic status suffer a more significant burden of poor health; and

WHEREAS Windsor-Essex has a higher than average number of individuals living in low income compared to the province; and

WHEREAS providing fluoride via community water offers the positive benefits equally for everyone in the community; and

WHEREAS global health experts and evidence support community water fluoridation to prevent tooth decay;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Windsor Essex County Health Unit recommends that the Province of Ontario amend the regulations of the Safe Drinking Water Act to require community water fluoridation for all municipal water systems (when source-water levels are below the Health Canada-recommended level of 0.7 mg/L) to prevent dental caries.