

MEMORANDUM

TO: Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: April 9, 2009

RE: **Fluoridation of Water**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with information on the fluoridation of water. It is in response to a recent enquiry from Deputy Mayor Hogg and has been placed on the agenda at the request of Deputy Mayor Heath, Chair of the Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee.

Fluoride is a naturally occurring substance, present in very small quantities in ground water. Many communities in York Region receive municipally treated water, which contains added fluoride (through fluoridation): Georgina, Richmond Hill (including Oak Ridges), Markham, and Vaughan. Additionally, the following communities have some supplementation of their water supplies with water that contains added fluoride: Aurora, Newmarket, and soon, Stouffville.

Fluoridation of drinking water in Ontario originated in Brantford in 1945, and today approximately 70% of Ontarians receive fluoridated drinking water. The benefits of adding fluoride are well known: decreased caries (tooth decay) severity and prevalence. Fluoridation is an effective method of reaching whole communities, regardless of residents' social or economic status. The levels of fluoride are monitored closely to ensure optimum levels, as outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards. In York Region, municipal water source reports show that all sources are consistently far below the maximum recommended levels.

The safety, efficacy and effectiveness of community water fluoridation have been extensively researched. Researchers have conducted 18 major reviews on fluoridation between 1997 and 2007. Reviews in 2007 by the Health Canada Expert Panel, the Institut national de santé du Quebec and the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia found that fluoridation is safe and no evidence has been found that it causes cancer, bone or kidney disease or birth defects.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.



KK/pf