

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
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Dear Heads of Council,

We are writing to you today to draw your attention to a significant public health issue and to seek your support to address this important issue at the municipal level. There are a growing number of communities across Ontario that are choosing to discontinue fluoridation of their municipal drinking water system in spite of consistent evidence that water fluoridation is a safe and effective method to reduce the risk of oral health problems for Ontarians.

Tooth decay is the single most common chronic disease among Canadian children. The importance of maintaining good oral health should not be taken lightly - it is an important part of being healthy overall. Poor oral health is linked to diabetes, heart disease, respiratory conditions, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis and low birth weight in babies. As such, water fluoridation is, and must be recognized, as a very important measure to protect the health of Ontarians.

The benefits of water fluoridation are well documented. More than 90 national and international professional health organizations, including Health Canada, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Dental Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization, have endorsed the use of fluoride at recommended levels to prevent tooth decay. In fact, the use of fluoride in drinking water has been called one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century by the CDC. According to expert research, fluoridated drinking water reduces the number of cavities in children's teeth, which contributes to their healthy development. Reductions of tooth decay have also been observed in adults and seniors who reside in communities with fluoridated water.

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Water fluoridation helps to reduce the cost of dental care. The Ontario Dental Association has stated that the cost of providing dental care if waiting until tooth decay occurs is much higher than the cost of preventing it. The CDC estimates that for every \$1 invested in community water fluoridation, \$38 is saved in dental treatment. Removing fluoride from drinking water will place those least able to afford or access dental treatment at a much higher risk for oral health problems. The health benefits of drinking water fluoridation extend to all residents in a community, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, education or employment.

Municipal leaders should consider carefully the range of factors and implications of removing fluoridation from municipal drinking water systems. We urge all of you to support fluoridation of drinking water in your communities so that everyone can enjoy the long-term health benefits.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister



David C. Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
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c. Roselle Martino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health Division