March 14, 2014

The Honourable Deb Matthews  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews:

Re: A Provincial Approach to Community Water Fluoridation

On February 28, 2014 at a regular meeting of the Board for the Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Board considered the attached resolution from Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit regarding community water fluoridation. The following motion was passed:

Motion No: 2014-13

Moved by: Gary Levine  
Seconded by: Bob Pringle

“That, the Board of Health for the Grey Bruce Health Unit support the resolution from Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 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; and further that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care be so advised.”

Carried

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Hazel Lynn MD, FCFP, MHSc  
Medical Officer of Health

Cc: All Ontario Boards of Health

Encl.
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.

... 2
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
Background – Resolution on Provincial Commitment to Community Water Fluoride

**SPONSOR: Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit**


“The practice of water fluoridation is one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th Century. More than 90 national and international professional health organizations including Health Canada, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Dental Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization have endorsed the use of fluoride at recommended levels to prevent tooth decay. 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.”

Since 1997 there have been 18 major reviews, including an expert panel convened by Health Canada in 2007 that have concluded that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective way to reduce dental decay. While the support for water fluoridation continues to be unwavering from a public health perspective, 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.

To date many health units across Ontario have had little recourse other than to becoming involved in conflict with proponents of the anti-fluoridation movement. The task of defending water fluoridation is resource intensive, can extend over long periods of time and draws public health expertise and energies away from other important issues. In instances where public health units are required to advocate at various municipalities concurrently the demand is unmanageable. What has resulted is a public health struggle for water fluoridation across Ontario that is happening in multiple locations, unpredictable in its nature and too often has ended with 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:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Year Fluoridation Stopped</th>
<th>Population Served by Water System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welland, Pelham, Fonthill, part of Thorold in Niagara Region</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>49,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryden in Northwestern Ontario</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo, St. Jacobs, Elmira in Waterloo Region</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>121,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeshore in Essex County</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amherstburg in Essex County</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor, LaSalle, Tecumseh In Windsor Essex County</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>239,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tottenham in Simcoe County</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baysville in Lake of Bays in Muskoka District</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville in Muskoka District</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>471,590</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on population coverage by water systems from the Ministry of the Environment

If public health units are to fulfill the requirements under the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) related to CWF that clearly support a health equity approach to improved oral health for Ontario’s population, it is clear that an alternate collective solution must be found.

The Role of State, Provincial and National Governments

In Ontario the responsibility resides with municipal governments to authorize community water fluoridation, under the Fluoridation Act.

Jurisdictions that have legislated community water fluoridation at the state, territorial or national level of government have been shown to be more effective in providing CWF to their respective municipal populations, with resulting reductions in dental decay. For example California is one of 13 states in the USA that have mandated fluoridation and has increased population coverage from 17% in 1995 to 62.5% in 2011. Similarly, Queensland one of 7 states in Australia with mandated fluoridation increased from 5% to 86% between the years from 2008 to 2012. Countries that have nationally mandated on community water fluoridation include: Brazil, Hong Kong, Singapore, Ireland and Malaysia. Israel mandated fluoridation in 1988 with substantial improvements in fluoridation coverage since that time; however in 2013 the new Minister of Health who as a mayor of Herzliya opposed fluoridation signed into law a measure that makes fluoridation of communities optional rather than mandatory in 2014.
The Call to Strengthened Provincial Commitment for Community Water Fluoridation in Ontario

In 2007, a proposal was made by the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health through alPHa to the Ministry of Health Promotion to consider the development of an Ontario Fluoridation Office that would review scientific evidence, track fluoridation status and challenges in Ontario and evaluate Ontario for effectiveness of CWF.

In 2011, at alPHa’s winter symposium a resolution was passed that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) strongly and publicly state its support for the practice of community water fluoridation as a proven, cost-effective, safe and equitable public health intervention that significantly contributes to improving the overall health of the population, and further that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies call for the Province of Ontario to provide support, including provincial legislation and funding to municipalities for the fluoridation of community drinking water.

Later that same year the Ontario Public Health Association passed a similar resolution supportive of the fluoridation of municipal drinking water and recommended adding under the Safe Drinking Water Act, a regulation change mandating the fluoridation of drinking water at a concentration of 0.5-0.8ppm, with optimal levels at 0.7 ppm, as evidence demonstrates that water fluoridation is a safe, economical, and proven public health measure to prevent dental caries in all age groups.

In 2012 the RNAO resolved a parallel motion to advocate to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Officer of the Premier that the regulations of the Safe Drinking Water Act be amended to mandate the fluoridation of municipal drinking supplies at the optimal concentration of 0.7 ppm or a range of 0.5 ppm to 0.8 ppm.

While the resolutions cited in this background have raised the profile of CWF as an important public health issue, the resulting action toward a provincial approach has been disappointing. The resolution that we bring forward at this time for alPHa is a more strongly and specifically stated call for the province to require all municipal water systems to have fluoride concentrations sufficient to safely and effectively reduce dental decay, and for the province to provide funding and technical support to municipalities for this to occur. 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.

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ii Communication with Jane McGinley, RDH, MBA Manager, Fluoridation and Preventive Health Activities Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations
http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/nohss/IndicatorV.asp?Indicator=2

http://www.astdd.org/bestpractices/DES06002CAfluoridation.pdf

Stock M, Pollick H. The CDA Foundation Model to Fluoridate Communities. California Dental Association Journal vol. 40, no. 8: 649 - 655
http://www.cda.org/Portals/0/journal/journal_082012.pdf

vi. California Dental Association Foundation
http://www.cdafoundation.org/learn/advocacy/fluoridation

Loh, T. Thirty-eight years of water fluoridation--the Singapore scenario. Community Dent Health. 1996 Sep;13 Suppl 2:47-50


Siegel-Itzkovich J. Professors slam change to water fluoridation policy. The Jerusalem Post 24/04/2013
http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=310965#