

The Hon. Madeleine Dubé
Minister of Health
PO Box 5001
Fredericton NB
E3B 5H1

March 1 2011

Dear Minister Dubé,

On behalf of the 320 dentists in the province, I am writing to you to reiterate the concerns of the New Brunswick Dental Society regarding the removal of fluoride from municipal water supplies in New Brunswick.

The Society is extremely troubled by the recent discussions that have taken place in the media related to fluoride and I wish to clarify some details.

In the opinion of the Canadian Dental Association and Health Canada, adding fluoride to water is "the best way to provide fluoride protection to a large number of people at a low cost"¹. The Chief Dental officer for Canada agrees: "The big advantage of water fluoridation is that it benefits all residents in a community, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, education, or employment"². It is the best way to provide protection to society's most vulnerable.

An additional benefit of water fluoridation is the reduction of dental care expenses. The Canadian Dental Association estimated that the cost of dental care in Canada reached \$11.4 billion in 2007, making it the second largest item in the privately funded health care budget, after drugs³. In an era of cost-cutting measures, eliminating fluoride in municipal water supplies simply shifts the costs to another department, and will cause those costs to grow exponentially. Dental decay is the most frequent condition suffered by children, aside from the common cold.

One needs only to ask any dentist if they can differentiate between a patient who has lived in a community where the water contains fluoride, and one who has not. The contrast can be marked.

The dental profession recognizes that one of the side effects of an overexposure to fluoride is dental fluorosis (white spots or mottling on dental enamel), caused by ingestion of too much fluoride in childhood.

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¹ http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral_health/faqs_resources/faqs/fluoride_faqs.asp

² Office of the Chief Dental Officer. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirgen/fnihb-dgspni/ocdo-bdc/project-eng.php#a6> (accessed February 25, 2011)

³ http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/cda/news_events/statistics/default.asp

In its 2007 report, Health Canada's Fluoride Expert Panel noted the following⁴:

- The occurrence of moderate dental fluorosis in Canada is low, and that there is an overall decreasing trend in dental fluorosis in Canada.
- Overall, the weight of evidence does *not* support a link between exposure to fluoride in drinking water at 1.5 mg/L and any adverse health effects regarding cancer, reproductive or developmental effects (such as Down's syndrome or intelligence quotient deficit), bone fractures, immunotoxicity, genotoxicity and/or neurotoxicity.
- There is a very low likelihood of skeletal fluorosis associated with excess fluoride intake. The optimal municipal water fluoride of 0.7 mg/L and the current Maximum Acceptable Concentration (MAC) of 1.5 mg/L of fluoride in drinking water are unlikely to cause this effect.
- The Panel supports community drinking water fluoridation as an effective public health method to reduce the prevalence of dental caries in the Canadian population.

It is our belief, as dentists, that the benefits of a fluoridated water supply far outweigh any other solution, and we hope that you will take the opportunity to discuss this further with your colleagues before any of New Brunswick's cities make the decision to eliminate the fluoride from their municipal water supplies.

The New Brunswick Dental Society would be pleased to discuss this further should you require any additional information. We appreciate your consideration of this most important issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Larry Peacocke,
President, New Brunswick Dental Society

⁴ Health Canada. *Findings and Recommendations of the Fluoride Expert Panel (January 2007)*. April 2008. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/2008-fluoride-fluorure/index-eng.php> (accessed February 25, 2011)