

**Ministry of Health
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The District Municipality of Muskoka
70 Pine Street
Bracebridge, Ontario
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To the Chair and Members, Muskoka District Council:

As Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, I am very concerned about the loss of fluoridated water in certain communities in spite of consistent evidence that water fluoridation is safe and effective.

I am pleased that the Council has been supporting water fluoridation since 2003, and I would urge you to continue displaying that leadership by reconfirming your support for the fluoridation of municipal water supplies on April 26th, 2011.

The value of water fluoridation should not be underestimated. As tooth decay is the single most common chronic disease among Canadians of all ages, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, heart disease and respiratory conditions, water fluoridation is an extremely important public health measure. In fact, water fluoridation has been called one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The benefits of water fluoridation are well documented. Even with other sources of fluoride available today, fluoridated water still has an impact on reducing the rates of tooth decay not only in children, but adults and seniors as well.

As local surveillance conducted by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit demonstrates, children in non-fluoridated areas of Simcoe Muskoka have 30 per cent more cavities than those in fluoridated areas. I would strongly caution that removing fluoride from municipal water supplies has the real potential to put the oral health of your citizens at risk.

From a cost perspective, water fluoridation has the capacity to help reduce dental care expenditures. The Ontario Dental Association has stated that the cost of waiting until tooth decay has manifested is significantly higher than the cost of preventing it in the first place. The CDC estimates \$38 in avoided costs for dental treatment for every \$1 invested in water fluoridation. With

the fluoridation of water playing an important role in the overall promotion of good oral health and prevention of dental decay, I am concerned that removing it may put a strain on, and impact the success of, important provincial programs such as the Children in Need of Treatment Program and Healthy Smiles Ontario - both developed to benefit those least able to afford dental services.

Indeed, removing fluoride from water will place those least able to afford or access dental treatment at an increased risk for oral health problems. The health benefits of water fluoridation extend to all residents in a community, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, education or employment.

You should also rest assured that fluoridated water is safe. In Ontario, fluoride additives are required to meet rigorous standards of quality and purity before they can be used. When they are added to water at levels recommended in Ontario and across the country, studies have not linked fluoride to cancer, bone fractures or intelligence levels.

An estimated 70 percent of Ontarians currently have access to water that is fluoridated. It is important that Muskoka remain a part of that important statistic and continue to fluoridate its municipal water supplies so that the residents can continue to enjoy the lasting health benefits.

Sincerely,

Originally Signed By

Arlene King, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health