
TO: Mayor Kogon and Members of Council

SUBMITTED BY: Jason MacDonald, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 21, 2019

SUBJECT: Fluoridation of Water Supply

ORIGIN: Amherst Town Council received a request from SOAR to add fluoride to the municipal water supply.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: Nova Scotia Environment Act **110 (1)** The Governor in Council may make regulations: (qa) providing for the protection of human health and the prevention of drinking-water health hazards through the control and regulation of drinking-water supplies, drinking-water testing and reporting;

Water and Wastewater Facilities and Public Drinking Water Supplies Regulations Section 35 An owner must ensure that the microbiological, chemical and physical characteristics of their public drinking water supply do not exceed the maximum acceptable concentration or interim maximum acceptable concentration for substances as set out in the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*.

RECOMMENDATION: That Committee of the Whole direct staff to draft a question for the ballot and bring forward the necessary resolution of Council to hold a plebiscite during the October 17, 2020 municipal election and that a promotional plan be developed to encourage interested citizens to educate themselves on the subject.

BACKGROUND: At the March 18, 2019 COW the following motion was passed: *Moved by Councillor Rhindress Seconded by Councillor Jones that staff be directed to provide a report to Council outlining a public education and engagement program.*

At the April 23 Committee of the Whole staff presented a public education and engagement plan. Following that presentation, Council directed staff *to take a second look at the public education process with regard to adding fluoridation in the water in Amherst ensuring public consultation opportunities for both those for and against fluoridation, and come back to the Committee with a recommendation at the May Committee of the Whole meeting.*

DISCUSSION: Staff do not have a recommendation on the subject of fluoridation. Council has stated that at present they do not have a position on this issue. Given the highly personal manner of the decision, staff are recommending that a plebiscite be held on the issue in order to allow the citizens of Amherst to decide.



Regarding an education process, staff are not experts on the benefits and risks associated with fluoridation of the water supply. In addition, there is inherent difficulty in finding accurate and unbiased information for both sides of the issue. Furthermore, it would be extremely difficult to present the information that is available in a manner that is seen as unbiased to both sides.

Given the difficulties outlined above, staff are recommending that a promotional plan be developed to encourage interested citizens to educate themselves on the subject.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: The cost of holding a plebiscite during the municipal election and of maintaining an additional web page would be minimal.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: The fact that a plebiscite will be held will be officially communicated by the Municipal Clerk through our Corporate Communications Coordinator.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS: There are no environmental implications to holding a plebiscite on this issue.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS: Both those for and against fluoridation cite social justice issues as the basis of their argument. A plebiscite may be a perfect forum to decide the issue.

ALTERNATIVES: The only alternative to a plebiscite is for Council to make a decision on the fluoridation issue. For the reasons stated above, staff are recommending a plebiscite be held.

ATTACHMENTS: No attachments.