NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROMOTION AND PROTECTION

- POSITION STATEMENT ON WATER FLUORIDATION -

The Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection supports fluoridation of municipal drinking water supplies in Nova Scotian communities as a safe, effective and economical means of preventing dental caries in all age groups.

Fluorides are found naturally throughout the world. They are present to some extent in all food and water so that all humans ingest some fluoride on a daily basis. In optimal concentrations, fluoride protects the teeth from caries (cavities) without any known harmful effects.

Fluoride may be used by individuals in the form of toothpastes, rinses, etc. or applied professionally in the form of gels, foams or varnishes. Fluoridation of the drinking water supply at minimum levels required for efficacy ensures its benefits are equally available to all, regardless of socioeconomic circumstance.

The fluoridation of drinking water supplies is a well-accepted measure to protect public health and is strongly supported by scientific evidence. It continues to be endorsed by over 90 national and international professional health organizations including Health Canada, the Canadian and American Dental Associations, the Canadian Medical Association, the World Health Organization and the Food and Drug Administration of the United States.

An expert panel, commissioned by Health Canada to review the scientific studies available on fluoride and its possible effects on health made a number of recommendations to Health Canada, including:

- to decrease slightly the amount of fluoride that can be added to municipal drinking water,
- to encourage the availability and use of low-fluoride toothpaste by children, and
- to suggest to makers of infant formula to reduce levels of fluoride in their products

This report was submitted to the federal government in January of 2007, and made public in June, 2008 on Health Canada's website.

The current optimal fluoride concentration for caries prevention is .7 mg/L. Levels should be monitored and adjusted to ensure consistency in concentrations and avoid fluctuations.

The safety and efficacy of water fluoridation has been frequently studied and continues to be supported by current science. Canadian and international studies agree that water that was fluoridated at optimum levels does not cause adverse health effects.

Communities considering water fluoridation should review their individual circumstances, giving attention to the dental health of community members, the likely exposure to adequate fluoride from other sources, and existing natural fluoride levels before making the decision.

Requests for further information may be directed to your Public Health Dental Hygienist or to the provincial Chief Public Health Officer through the Department of Health Promotion and Protection.

Supporting Scientific Studies:

Findings and Recommendations of the Fluoride Expert Panel (January, 2007)
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/2008-fluoride-fluorure/index-eng.php

National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. 1999:
"Water Fluoridation at optimal levels continues to provide significant benefits in the prevention of dental caries for both deciduous (baby) and permanent (adult) teeth. It remains the most effective means of achieving community-wide exposure to the caries preventive effects of fluoride and should remain unchanged."

Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General. 2000:
"Community Water Fluoridation 'is 'safe and effective in preventing 'dental caries "in 'both children and adults,, Water fluoridation benefits all residents serviced by community water supplies regardless of their social or economic status
http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/fact_sheets/sg04.htm

Systematic Review of Water Fluoridation. UK/International study. 2000:
"Fluoridation of drinking water supplies does reduce caries prevalence, both as measured by the portion of children who are caries free and by the mean change in deft/DMFT Score." The deft Score determines the dental caries status for primary teeth decayed.
(d= decayed, e = extracted due to caries, f = filled t = teeth)
http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/pdf/fluorid.pdf

Water Fluoridation. US Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2001
"Fluoride has contributed profoundly to the improved dental health of persons in the United States and other countries. Fluoride is needed regularly throughout life to protect teeth against tooth decay. To ensure additional gains in oral health, water fluoridation should be extended to additional communities."
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5014a1.htm

European Fluoridation Forum. 2002
"Water fluoridation has been very effective in improving the oral health of the Irish population, especially of children, but also of adults and the elderly"
...."The prevalence of dental decay is approximately 30-50% lower in fluoridated areas of the Republic of Ireland compared with non fluoridated areas in Northern Ireland."
http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/fluoridation_forum.pdf?direct=1