

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

APR 04 2012

Ms. Colleen O'Neill  
colleenc@amtelecom.net

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

Thank you for your correspondence of March 6, 2012, concerning the fluoridation of drinking water and the regulation of fluorosilicates.

In Canada, responsibility regarding the safety of drinking water generally lies with the provincial and territorial governments. Health Canada worked with the provinces and territories, through the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water, to develop the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*. The provinces and territories use the Guidelines to establish their own requirements for drinking water quality and have sole responsibility regarding implementation. For that reason, your request that Health Canada regulate municipal drinking water supply treatment chemicals as drugs is an issue that falls outside the jurisdiction of the *Food and Drugs Act*.

As part of the Guidelines, Health Canada has recently conducted a thorough review of the relevant peer-reviewed scientific literature for fluoride and its possible impacts on human health, taking into consideration all sources of exposure to fluoride. Based on this review, there are no adverse health effects from exposure to drinking water containing fluoride at or below the Maximum Acceptable Concentration (MAC) of 1.5 mg/L. The optimal concentration for fluoridation is less than half the MAC (i.e., 0.7 mg/L). The Department continually reviews new scientific reports and articles which explore possible links between fluoride and various health effects to ensure our advice remains protective of public health.

The use of fluoride in the prevention of dental cavities continues to be endorsed by more than 90 national and international professional health organizations, including Health Canada. As dental disease is the number one chronic disease among children and adolescents in North America, water fluoridation is an important public health measure. The Department promotes and endorses the use of water fluoridation as a means of achieving good oral health through the prevention of cavities. Water fluoridation benefits

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all residents in a community, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, education, or employment or dental insurance status. I would like to clarify that the purpose of adding fluoride to water supplies is not to treat dental decay, which requires the intervention of a dentist, but to reduce the incidence of dental cavities.

There are several fluoridation additives that can be used in municipal drinking water supplies. Health Canada recommends that drinking water treatment additives such as fluoridation agents be certified to the appropriate standard, specifically NSF/ANSI Standard 60: Drinking Water Treatment Chemicals - Health Effects. This standard requires a toxicology review of the product to ensure its safety at the maximum use level and to evaluate potential contaminants in the product.

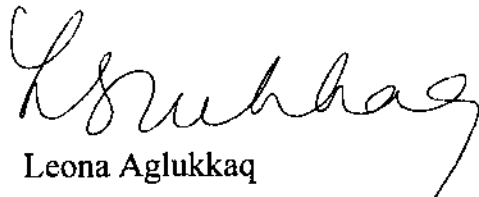
With regard to the fluorosilicate compounds hydrofluorosilicic acid and sodium silicofluoride, these compounds break down in the municipal water supply to release fluoride ions. As a result, they are not found at the tap, which means that drinking water is not a source of exposure to these compounds.

Although Health Canada endorses the use of fluoride as a public health measure to protect dental health, decisions regarding drinking water requirements are made by the appropriate provincial or territorial agency. The fluoridation of municipal drinking water supplies is a decision that is made by each municipality in collaboration with the appropriate provincial or territorial authority.

For specific questions regarding the fluoridation of drinking water in Ontario, I would suggest you contact your provincial representative on the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water, Dr. Satish Deshpande, Team Leader, Water Standards Section, Standards Development Branch, Ministry of the Environment. Dr. Deshpande can be reached by e-mail at [satish.deshpande@ontario.ca](mailto:satish.deshpande@ontario.ca).

Thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Leona Aglukkaq