



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 16, 2014
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Citizens' Panel on Fluoridation - BOH14015 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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Council Direction:

At the General Issues Committee (GIC) meeting on December 4, 2013, Council directed staff to report back on the cost and feasibility of a citizens' panel addressing community water fluoridation in Hamilton. The purpose of this report is to report back as directed.

Information:

Background

A number of discussions about whether or not to fluoridate Hamilton's drinking water supply have occurred at Council since Hamilton first fluoridated its water supply in 1966. This included a Council vote to support fluoridation at its Board of Health meeting on November 17, 2008.

These discussions have included both the scientific arguments such as effectiveness and safety, as well as the personal value of choice. Since Public Health Services' (PHS) last report on fluoridation, the scientific evidence has remained unchanged. Community water fluoridation remains a safe and effective means of preventing dental caries and improving oral health, according to Hamilton's Medical Officer of Health and other scientific leaders including Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization.

As fluoridation of Hamilton's drinking water affects the entire city, a referendum was suggested (by some members of Council) at the December 4, 2013 GIC meeting as a way of giving citizens input into this decision.

After delegate presentations and discussion, Council decided not to pursue a referendum and instead directed PHS to look into the option of having a citizens' appointed panel, similar to the Citizens' Panel for Area Rating, to make recommendations on community water fluoridation.

This report provides an overview of the consultation process, defines the citizens' committee or panel, describes the process, and the cost of a citizens' panel on fluoridating Hamilton's water. The report will not discuss the issue of fluoridation itself (i.e. the safety and benefits) as this has been discussed in previous reports.

Consultation

PHS consulted with Mike Kirkopoulos (City Manager's Office). Mike was the project liaison for the Citizens' Panel on Area Rating. He worked with the consultant team and prepared the staff report. Mike shared information about the City's experience with its Citizens' Panel on Area Rating including cost, process and process evaluation to learn how to approach a possible Citizens' Panel on Fluoridation.

PHS also consulted with Simon Kiss, Wilfred University. Simon was a delegate at the December 4, 2013 GIC meeting about citizens' panels and offered suggestions on a possible approach for a Citizens' Panel on Fluoridation.

Dr. Jonathan Rose, Queen's University, was also consulted about his knowledge and experience with citizens' panels. Dr. Rose also provided advice to the City of Hamilton for their Citizens' Panel on Area Rating.

This report incorporates their findings and recommendations.

Citizens' Panel Overview

A citizens' committee or panel is formed, usually through a selection process that includes volunteering, to review and discuss an issue and make recommendations.

During the process, citizens are asked about their thoughts, recommendations and perspectives. This can occur through surveys, public forums and focus groups. The information captured forms an input into the recommendation development and deliberation.

The main benefit of a citizens' panel, assuming the selection and implementation process is sound, is that it gives a diverse representative group of citizens enough time and opportunity to thoughtfully review and make recommendations and decisions on an

issue. The potential risk is that the panel may not make an informed decision or is biased. Therefore, it is important to have a strong, robust process for selecting non-biased members and a good process for decision-making. The next section will outline the process to minimize these risks.

Process

Similar to the Citizens' Panel on Area Rating, setting up a Panel would involve the following steps:

- 1) Form a Steering Committee to oversee the process. This would be an arms' length committee that could include consultants, staff and community members with knowledge and expertise on citizen engagement.
- 2) Randomly select representatives from each Ward and four to six additional members. The additional members will cover the potential of representatives dropping out and/or sickness, etc. but still conscious that there be equal distribution.
- 3) Ensure representational demographic (age, sex, socioeconomic status) sample.
- 4) Panel will receive necessary background information and technical analysis on which to base its judgment, opinions and decisions. Extensive education of the issue will be required. For example, this can occur through expert presentations.

The Steering Committee and the Citizens' Panel would need to agree on a way to approach this task including how to make decisions and how their work will be presented.

A consultant with Community Engagement experience would need to be hired to conduct this process. This process is expected to take approximately six months to complete. This can occur through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

Cost

The estimated cost of this process, including forming the panel and making recommendations to Council, is expected to be approximately \$95K based on previous experience with the Citizens' Panel on Area Rating. In addition, approximately 200 hours of staff time involving three to four staff are required to support this process. This would include one staff from the City Manager's Office, as well as two or three management-level staff from PHS.