

SPEAKING NOTES V.2 ON CWF – DR. PETER FENDRICH

CENTENNIAL HALL

JANUARY 25, 2012

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Dr. Peter Fendrich. I am a Past President of the Ontario Dental Association, an Adjunct Professor in Oral Medicine at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry and a practicing dentist in London since 1975.

I am here on behalf of the Ontario Dental Association and the more than 8000 dentists practicing in Ontario. But more importantly, I am here on behalf of my patients and my community.

In your published agenda it asks that people “disclose pecuniary interests related to agenda items” so I wish to say that one could reasonably anticipate that my profession will be significantly busier repairing decayed teeth and may, therefore, profit financially if fluoride is removed from our water. Having said that, I have a moral, ethical and professional responsibility to tell you the truth. I would further add, that it is not my

intention to tell you what to do, but rather to provide you with information, evidence-based information, that would allow you to make an informed decision. That is my goal.

If I achieve my goal, you will have made a decision that is knowledge-based, founded on facts and not on fear; based on the best science and not on bias.

Anybody can “cherry pick” articles and provide opinions to support a particular point of view. That is called bias. It is widely understood and accepted that one of the highest levels of evidence is what is called a “systematic review”. It is considered a “gold standard” for biomedical information that is, by definition, accurate, reproducible and unbiased.

I would, therefore, like to refer you to such a review that was commissioned by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council in 2007 and published in 2008 in a peer reviewed journal out of Oxford University called Evidence-Based Dentistry. It is entitled “A Systematic Review of the Efficacy and Safety of Fluoridation”. The research questions addressed the cavity-reducing benefits and potential health risks of providing fluoride systemically. Over 5400 articles in the medical literature were identified and

considered. You would agree, I am sure, that this topic has received a lot of scrutiny over the years. The systematic review concluded that “Fluoridation of drinking water remains the most effective and socially equitable means of providing community wide exposure to the caries prevention effects of fluoride.” The purported health risks were found to be unsubstantiated. In preparation for this evening, I reviewed the findings of similar comprehensive reviews that were published in Ireland, the UK, the United States and Canada. Interestingly, they all came to the same conclusions. I would be pleased to provide either the links online or the paper copies of these reports to the members of the committee if they so wish.

To simplify the issue, it is all about dosage. What does that mean? It means that too much is, indeed, harmful (toxic), too little is useless but, in the right amount it has been proven to be beneficial (therapeutic).

This logic applies to everything and anything that we ingest. Consider table salt for example. We sprinkle salt on our food. Too much is harmful but in the right amount it makes our food taste better. Let me say it again, **IT IS ABOUT DOSAGE.**

You might wonder, why do I care? Allow me to explain.

My parents had dentures, I have all of my teeth, although, some are filled; my daughters have become adults with no fillings or cavities present. In 3 generations we see a dramatic improvement in oral health, in large measure due to water fluoridation.

I see this pattern repeated over and over again in my practice, as do my colleagues. I am proud of that! It is something the dental profession can take pride in supporting and was instrumental in what the Centre of Disease Control in the U.S. calls one of the top 10 major successes in preventative health care in the 20th century.

Know that if you decide to keep our water fluoridated, you will be in synch with over 90 respected health care organizations from all over the world.

If you decide otherwise, know that you will have compromised the dental health of people who may not have access to regular dental care like the single mom with 3 kids, the elderly, the working poor, veterans, cancer patients, people with disabilities, vulnerable people who aren't here necessarily to make their voices heard. I care about them all and I am quite sure

you do too.

In conclusion, I can only hope that our elected officials will make decisions that are evidence-based, knowledge based and not fear-based.

To quote the former U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “the only thing to fear is fear itself”.

Thank you for your attention.