

# Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Annual Report 2008-2009

[http://www.eco.on.ca/eng/uploads/eng\\_pdfs/2009/ar2008su.pdf](http://www.eco.on.ca/eng/uploads/eng_pdfs/2009/ar2008su.pdf)

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## Review of Application R2007018:

5.2.11 Review of MOE Policies or Regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act , 2002 as they Relate to Inorganic Fluorides in Drinking Water  
(Review Undertaken by MOE)

### Background/Summary of Issues

In November 2007, two applicants requested that MOE review existing policies, regulations and standards (as well as the need for new regulations and policies) under the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 (SDWA) as they relate to the addition of inorganic fluorides (and any other accompanying contaminants) to drinking water.

Although Japan, China, 98 per cent of Europe, and some Ontario cities (e.g., Welland, Thorold and Dryden) have banned or stopped adding fluoride to drinking water, several municipalities in Ontario continue this practice. Most fluoridated communities in Ontario add hydrofluorosilicic acid (an inorganic fluoride) to their drinking water. The applicants assert that the “additions of toxic inorganic [vs. Organic] fluorides...with its accompanying contaminants such as inorganic arsenic and lead into our drinking water” have:

- resulted in increased contamination of groundwater, surface water and sewage effluent to water bodies and natural environments;
- caused significant harm to water bodies, ground water sources and the life therein; and
- caused harm to the health of certain subsets of the population, including babies, pregnant women, fetuses and the elderly.

### Ministry Response

MOE agreed to undertake this review in February 2008. The ministry indicated that Health Canada, as secretariat to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water (CDW), is revising the technical support document for the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guideline for fluoride and is expected to conduct a national consultation within the next two years. As of April 2009, Health Canada had prepared a consultation document but was awaiting approval from the federal government to initiate consultations.

MOE stated that the Government of Ontario participates on the CDW and will consider the applicants' comments before undertaking a provincial consultation via the Environmental Registry. MOE stated that this provincial consultation will coincide with Health Canada's national consultation. The ministry stated that comments received through the provincial public consultation, as well as material provided in the application, will be considered in setting new policies regarding fluoride in drinking water.

### ECO Comment

The ECO will review the handling of this application once the ministry has completed its review.