

Côte St. Luc 'better not fluoridate the water,' fluoride opponent tells mayor
West End Chronicle by Martin C. Barry March 19th 2008

A Côte St. Luc environmentalist has warned Mayor Anthony Housefather that he better do his homework before taking any serious steps towards having fluoride injected into Côte St. Luc's drinking water.

Last week during Côte St. Luc city council's monthly sitting, Marsha Akman, a Macdonald Avenue resident, reacted to a news story published in the Chronicle, which disclosed Housefather's support for the idea of fluoridating tap water.

In arguing her case for fluoridation to council last month, Dr. Shirley Blachman, a paediatrician at the Montreal Children's Hospital, had noted that the City of Montreal, which furnishes water to Côte St. Luc, is the last North American municipality of its size that does not add fluoride.

"Water fluoridation is the most cost-effective method for dental caries prevention, particularly as it reaches the poor and disadvantaged population group with the highest risk," Blachman had said.

She wanted Côte St. Luc city council to enact a resolution calling on Montreal to add fluoride. "You certainly laid out good reasons why fluoridation should occur in the water system and I personally support it," Housefather had replied.

"Have you checked into this, Anthony," Akman told the mayor last week. "Do you know how bad fluoride is? ... "Have you checked with the other side? ... I would really like a report on this before any resolution is drawn or before you sit down ...

"Before any resolution is adopted, you really better check on it," she added. "Côte St. Luc better not fluoridate the water. You're going to have big problems."

Responding to Akman, Housefather said he had examined many fluoridation studies over the years and concluded, "The majority of studies favour fluoridation, and then there's a significant minority of people who say that fluoridation poses a significant risk.

"But nobody knows one way or the other. All I can say is that it seems to me from the balance of studies that I have read is that fluoridation offers more benefits than it has potential drawbacks. That doesn't mean, though, that our council is not going to carefully research the issue before we adopt any resolution."

Housefather said not all members of council have read the available studies yet. "So council hasn't adopted anything. We got a request and council will look at it ... We've, in fact, gotten several e-mails from residents on both sides asking us to look at this and that study and we're reading."

According to Avrom Shtern, a member of the Green Coalition and a Côte St. Luc resident, there is a tendency among environmentalists to view fluoride with suspicion, even if it is a naturally-occurring compound.

"There have been studies that show that people who drink fluoridated water have better teeth," he acknowledged. "But on the other hand, what are the consequences?" According to Shtern, fluoride is known to block and corrode plumbing fixtures. "If that is the case, then what does it do to our bodies?"