

Implementation will be solely at the discretion of the Director-General of Health, and if a local (authority) refuses to comply it will initially be fined \$200,000, and \$10,000 per day thereafter.

This must be one of the most draconian, undemocratic, potentially monumentally costly, grossly ill-informed and totally unnecessary pieces of legislation mooted for a long while.

What is also disgraceful is that the prime minister's chief science adviser has just released an update of an earlier report on fluoridation that glosses over or ignores more recently published fluoride science.

There is no attempt at risk management, which is a function and critical obligation of governments through which they are expected to protect citizens.

A major risk with fluoridation is accumulating evidence that ingesting fluoride has a measurable effect on the neurodevelopment of early childhood cognitive ability. In May last year four experts declared evidence on the neurotoxic effect of fluoride on the developing brain, including fluoride from community water supplies, to a US District Court (Food & Water Watch et al vs US EPA et al).

Those declaring expert evidence were Philippe Grandjean, MD, DMSc (Harvard School of Public Health); Howard Hu, MD, MPH, ScD (School of Public Health - University of Washington); Bruce Lanphear, MD,

MPH (Faculty of health sciences at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver); and Kathleen Thiessen, PhD (Risk assessment scientist at Oak Ridge Center for Risk Analysis, Tennessee).

The general consensus among these experts is that the weight of epidemiological evidence leaves no reasonable doubt that developmental neurotoxicity is a serious human health risk associated with elevated fluoride exposure, including those occurring at the levels added to drinking water in fluoridated areas.

The Ministry of Health is blind to developmental fluoride neurotoxicity, and has stated in an OIA response, "The ministry does not hold the information requested."

There are three cognitive biases that clearly apply to ministry decision-making on fluoridation. They are the tendency towards over-reliance on pre-existing information, avoidance of information that challenges a belief, and searching for ways that support existing beliefs.

If an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public domain, such as affecting general health, the action should not be taken in the absence of scientific near-certainty about its safety.

The Ministry of Health cannot provide that scientific near-certainty with respect to fluoridation.

The Associate Minister of Health,

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Ayesha Verrall (who is responsible for the bill), must withdraw it pending a full public inquiry with evidence taken on oath.

Ross Forbes
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Fluoridate or be fined

This week the House will debate the second reading of the Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill, which, if enacted, has the potential to mandate fluoridation nationwide.