Open Letter by DG Church to Mid-Canterbury Residents: [ADVERTISEMENT]

Ashburton District Council stopped fluoridating the town's water in 2002. In Aug/Sep 2006 Dr Martin Lee (Public Dentist, CDHB) and Dr Daniel Williams (Medical Officer of Health) advised council, and claimed in media statements, that this action had caused a 25% increase in child dental decay. That claim was challenged by Dr Hardy Limeback (Prof. of Dentistry and head of preventative dentistry at Univ. of Toronto) who, in a statement to The Guardian in Sep. 2006, claimed that fluoridation merely causes a delay in tooth eruption so that an initial perception of lowered decay in baby teeth is soon lost as the permanent teeth develop. In March '14 Dr Justin Wall (local dentist) claimed in M.C. Herald that removal of fluoride had caused a 30% deterioration in oral health and also stated that fluoridation is of benefit to adults. But evidence capable of independent verification has not been forthcoming to me. To get clarity of evidence I have had to make formal request to CDHB under the Official Information Act. I now present the CDHB's own data in table format below. The factual data leads to the inescapable conclusions that I detail at the bottom of these tables.

SCHOOL DENTAL SERVICES - ORAL HEALTH STATISTICS

For Schools connected to Ashburton and Methven urban water supplies

Ashburton 5 Year Olds

	Data from CDHB			My Extrapolations	
Year	No. of Children	Total No. DMFT	Total No. Caries Free	Average DMFT	Percentage Caries Free
2002	**117**	**248**	**60**	**2.1**	**51.3%**
2003	94	175	41	1.9	43.6%
2004	118	110	57	0.9	48.3%
2005 - 2010		(unavailable)			
2011	150	244	89	1.6	59.3%
2012	144	292	80	2.0	55.6%
2013	185	355	97	1.9	52.4%
3 Year Average	**160**	**297**	**89**	**1.9**	**55.6%**

Ashburton 12 Year Olds

	Data from CDHB			My Extrapolations	
Year	No. of Children	Total No. DMFT	Total No. Caries Free	Average DMFT	Percentage Caries Free
2002	**250**	**470**	**100**	**1.9**	**40.0%**
2003	202	294	84	1.5	41.6%
2004	187	330	80	1.8	42.8%
2005 - 2010		(unavailable)			
2011	194	197	110	1.0	56.7%
2012	235	284	120	1.2	51.1%
2013	281	352	142	1.3	50.5%
3 Year Average	**237**	**278**	**124**	**1.2**	**52.3%**

Methven 5 Year Olds

	Data from CDHB			My Extrapolations	
Year	No. of Children	Total No. DMFT	Total No. Caries Free	Average DMFT	Percentage Caries Free
2002	**27**	**35**	**14**	**1.3**	**51.9%**
2003	34	35	24	1.0	70.6%
2004	37	84	19	2.3	51.4%
2005 - 2010		(unavailable)			
2011	54	67	32	1.2	59.3%
2012	51	61	38	1.2	74.5%
2013	38	52	26	1.4	68.4%
3 Year Average	**48**	**60**	**32**	**1.3**	**66.7%**

Methven 12 Year Olds

	Data from CDHB			My Extrapolations	
Year	No. of Children	Total No. DMFT	Total No. Caries Free	Average DMFT	Percentage Caries Free
2002	**36**	**66**	**17**	**1.8**	**47.2%**
2003	49	81	21	1.7	42.9%
2004	54	80	18	1.5	33.3%
2005 - 2010		(unavailable)			
2011	72	106	28	1.5	38.9%
2012	69	96	30	1.4	43.5%
2013	75	99	36	1.3	48.0%
3 Year Average	**72**	**100**	**31**	**1.4**	**43.1%**

Notes

a) CDHB means "Canterbury District Health Board"; DMFT means "decayed, missing, filled teeth"; Caries Free means "no tooth decay". CDHB advises that it does not hold comparable figures for the years 2005 to 2010

b) Fluoridation of Ashburton town's water stopped in 2002 and the stoppage was affirmed by referendum in 2007. The continuation of fluoridation for Methven town was affirmed by referendum in 2008.

My Conclusions:

1. Oral health of Ashburton children did not deteriorate after fluoridation ceased in 2002, as claimed by some who were in a position to know better.
2. Since cessation of fluoridation In Ashburton in 2002, the oral health of Ashburton children has improved, and significantly so for 12 year-olds.
3. Because the permanent teeth of Ashburton's 12 year-olds have improved without fluoridation, Dr Justin Wall's claim that fluoridation benefits adults lacks credibility.
4. Compared to Ashburton, a seeming benefit to Methven 5 year-olds is lost by age 12. This backs the claim by dental Prof. Hardy Limeback that fluoridation merely delays tooth eruption.
5. The permanent teeth of Ashburton 12 year-olds have never been subject to fluoridation and yet they have better oral health than their peers in fluoridated Methven.

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