



**AN BILLE SLAINTE (SOLATHAIRTI UISCE A FHLUAIRIDIU),
1959.**

**HEALTH (FLUORIDATION OF WATER SUPPLIES) BILL,
1959.**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM.

1. The object of this Bill is to reduce the incidence of dental decay by providing for the addition of fluorine to piped public water supplies in accordance with recommendations made to the Minister for Health by the Fluorine Consultative Council. This Council, which was established by the Minister on the 15th January, 1957, made a detailed study of the benefits, the practicability and the safety of fluoridation. Their report was published in October, 1958 (Pr. 4748). The following are the paragraphs of this report containing the recommendations made by the Council :

“ 38. Having considered all the information available to it on the relationship between fluorine and dental decay the Council is satisfied that an increased intake of fluorine will reduce the incidence of dental caries and that it is desirable to provide for such an increased intake. The Council is further satisfied that the increased intake of fluorine can best be provided by the fluoridation of public water supplies to the level of 1.0 part per million. In so recommending, the Council is aware that not quite 50% of the community would thereby benefit at present even if all public piped water supplies in the country were fluoridated but the percentage will increase according as public piped water supplies are extended.

“ 39. Before any public water supply is fluoridated the Council considers that steps should be taken to assess the incidence of dental caries in children resident in the area served by that water supply. The Council also considers that subsequent to fluoridation adequate steps should be taken to permit a proper evaluation of the results.

“ 40. In so far as the engineering aspects of the fluoridation of public water supplies are concerned, the Council sees no particular difficulty in the procedure as the methods employed in the addition of fluoride to a water supply are similar to those in common use for the addition of other chemicals to water. The methods used in the protection of public water-works workers handling fluoride salts are similar to those used in the handling of other chemicals which may have harmful effects and do not need special description here.

“ 41. The Council is in doubt as to whether local authorities have the necessary statutory authority to add fluoride to public water supplies. It recommends the introduction of any legislation which may be necessary to enable local authorities to discharge this function.”

2. Under *section 2* of the Bill, a duty to arrange for fluoridation of water supplied to the public by sanitary authorities through pipes will be laid on the local authorities who administer the health services. This duty will be performed in accordance with regulations made by the Minister for Health. In particular, these regulations will specify how much fluorine may be added but the amount to be specified cannot be greater than one part per million parts

of water. The Minister will be given power to fix a time limit for the fluoridation of any water supply. Under *section 3*, any doubt as to the health authority to be responsible for the fluoridation of a particular supply may be resolved by the Minister.

3. Fluoridation being a measure to protect health, it is appropriate that it should be a duty of the health authorities to arrange for it, but it is necessary that the sanitary authorities, who are responsible for the provision of public water supplies, should co-operate in the practical application of this measure. This will be provided for by regulations under *section 4* of the Bill, in the making of which the Minister for Local Government will be consulted. A sanitary authority's expenditure on fluoridation (including loan charges on money borrowed to provide equipment), will be recouped by the health authority. The health authorities' expenditure will, in turn, be recoupable to the extent of one half from the Health Services Grant, subject to the usual rule for the exclusion of capital expenditure and loan charges. Where a water supply serves the areas of two or more health authorities, an appropriate part of the cost of fluoridation will be charged by the arranging authority on the health authority or authorities for the other area or areas.

4. It is particularly with a view to implementing the recommendation in paragraph 39 (cited above) of the Consultative Council's Report that provision is being made by *section 6* of the Bill for surveys of dental caries. These surveys will be carried out by health authorities, as and when required by the Minister for Health, and should be of considerable value in enabling statistical material on the benefits of fluoridation to be prepared.

5. The amendment of *section 2* of the Health Services (Financial Provisions) Act, 1947 by *section 7* of the Bill will permit of expenditure on fluoridation ranking, from the time it is introduced, for recoupment from the Health Services Grant. As that section of the 1947 Act stands, new health services can be recognised only with effect from the beginning of a financial year so that, if the Bill were to become law after 1st April, 1960, expenditure on fluoridation could not become recoupable until 1st April, 1961, unless the section is amended in its application to the service under the Bill.

*An Roinn Sláinte.
Feabhra, 1960.*

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