



Effective date: January 29, 2021

Pacific Montessori Society Water Testing Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

Independent school authorities are expected to test for lead content in drinking water in their school facilities to ensure it meets provincial requirements established by the Ministry of Health, such as the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality for lead.

Authorities should take reasonable and prompt steps to resolve elevated lead levels that are outside established guidelines on any drinking water quality test results.

While this policy specifically addresses lead content in drinking water, the Ministry of Education expects independent school authorities will work with appropriate health authorities to address other issues that affect the quality of water as prescribed under applicable provincial and federal legislation.

2.0 Policy Rationale

Student health and safety is a concern shared by all parties in the K-12 education system. This policy provides minimum requirements for testing lead content in drinking water of school facilities, reporting of the results, and mitigation strategies to eliminate or reduce any risks to students and staff.

3.0 Policy in Full

All water suppliers in the province are required to test their water regularly. This includes small private systems (such as restaurants), cooperatively owned systems (such as strata properties), and larger municipal systems owned by local governments.

Independent school authorities operating private water systems must contact their local health authority to ensure they are meeting all testing requirements.

Independent school authorities are responsible for ensuring the overall safety of their facilities, including, the quality of drinking water within their systems and plumbing.

Independent school facilities must comply with the enactments of British Columbia, including those relating to health, safety, and water quality.

4.0 Procedures Related to Policy

Authorities are expected to consult with the appropriate Health Authority to develop a water quality lead testing program for drinking water in their school facilities that would outline the following;

- Risk assessment
- Water testing
- Mitigation strategies
- Communication plan

5.0 Risk Assessment

Selkirk Montessori School will develop a risk assessment based on the age of the school building, recent improvements, and any history of elevated levels of lead in the water.

6.0 Water Testing

- 6.1 Initially, all outlets that provide drinking water in school facilities should be tested for lead content by December 15, 2017. The Ministry of Education will be monitoring compliance with this requirement. It is the Ministry of Education's expectation that authorities will complete lead content testing on all school facilities once every 3 years. As a best practice, annual testing is recommended.
- 6.2 Selkirk Montessori School will work with Island Health to determine a testing program for the school. The testing procedure and amount of samples taken at the school will be determined in consultation with the Island Health and all test results will be shared with Island Health.

7.0 Mitigation Strategies

- 7.1 If sample results reveal lead levels exceed concentration of 0.005 mg/L (5 parts per billion) (based on maximum allowable concentration in Health Canada's Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality, Selkirk Montessori School, in consultation with Island Health, will undertake mitigation strategies which may include:
 - Flushing regimes
 - Deactivation of water sources and supplemental signage
 - Installation of filtration systems
 - Plumbing upgrades
 - Or other steps that result in reducing the exposure to lead to acceptable levels

8.0 Communication Plan

- 8.1 In the event that testing finds drinking water concentrations of lead at or above the maximum acceptable level, Selkirk Montessori School will:
- a. immediately inform the Independent Schools Branch of the issue and mitigation strategies. Ongoing compliance with this policy will be confirmed during monitoring visits and external evaluations.
 - b. work collaboratively with Island Health to communicate the results of testing lead content in drinking water to parents, students and staff by describing the following;
 - rationale for testing lead in drinking water,
 - identify partnership with the Health Authority to work toward a solution,
 - state results of sampling,
 - identify mitigation strategies implemented or being consider by the authority, and
 - provide contact information for the authority and the Regional Health Authority for parents, students and staff to request further information.
- 8.2 Ongoing monitoring visits and external evaluations will confirm compliance with this policy. Testing results should be recorded by using the [Ministry of Education's Independent Schools Drinking Water Reporting Tool](#) and updated as part of the ongoing testing cycle outlined above.

References:

- <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water>
- [Minimizing Exposure to Lead from Drinking Water Distribution Systems](#)
- [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality: Guideline Technical Document – Lead](#)
- [Guidance on Controlling Corrosion in Drinking Water](#)
- [A Manual for Operators of Schools, Private School and Day Nurseries with Excess Lead in their Drinking Water \(Ontario\)](#)
- [Guide for schools, private schools and day nurseries on flushing and testing for lead in drinking water \(Ontario\)](#)

Authority

- [Drinking Water Protection Act](#)
- [Drinking Water Protection Regulation](#)
- [Public Health Act](#)
- [Independent School Act](#)