



Cowichan Valley School District

BRIEFING NOTE

Date of Report: May 2, 2017

Prepared for: The Board of Education for Information for the May 2, 2017 Open Board Meeting

Subject: Water Testing Results

Background:

On February 24, 2016 School Districts in British Columbia received correspondence from the Ministry of Education regarding the importance for ensuring water quality within all schools to reduce or eliminate any risks to students and staff. Districts were encouraged to work with their local health authorities to establish a plan to evaluate and mitigate any issues.

On September 27, 2016, the Ministry of Education provided districts with a "Policy for Testing Lead Content in Drinking Water of School Facilities". Districts are required to test for lead content in schools where the plumbing system was installed before 1990 once every 3 years, therefore a minimum of 1/3 of the school facilities constructed prior to 1990 in a school district's inventory must be tested each year. In School District 79, it was decided to test a sample of fixtures in all of our facilities in year one to establish a baseline. Testing was completed prior to March 30, 2017 and test results were submitted to the Ministry and Island Health on the provided spreadsheet.

Discussion:

The protocol for testing is as follows. Test one is done first thing in the morning after the water has been sitting in the fixture for a minimum of 6 hours. The second sample is drawn after the water has run for 30 seconds and the third is drawn after the water runs cold which is typically 2-3 minutes. Samples were collected at all of our sites and delivered to Maxxam labs in Victoria for analysis.

A total of 91 fixtures were tested. 27 of those fixtures showed levels of lead above the maximum allowable concentration on the first test. 22 of those fixtures were acceptable after running the water for 30 seconds first thing in the morning (test 2). This is a practice recommended by Health Canada for all fixtures including households.

Action:

For the affected facilities, the District has implemented protocols to run each fixture for 30 seconds each morning before student use. Those schools are:

- Discovery Elementary
- Frances Kelsey Secondary
- Chemainus Secondary
- Chemainus Elementary
- CVOLC
- Ecole Cobble Hill

- Alexander
- Cowichan Secondary
- Palsson Elementary
- Lake Cowichan School
- Drinkwater Elementary
- Operations Department/School Board Office
- Growing Together Daycare

Four of the remaining five samples tested acceptable after running the water for an additional 2 – 3 minutes. These fixtures are all in adult areas and signs have been posted with instructions to run the water.

At Discovery Elementary, the sink in the PAC room showed unexplainable numbers after the second test and was disconnected pending further testing. As a precaution, all fountains at Discovery are being tested this week and the Staff Room fixture is being replaced. As with all affected schools (above), Discovery will observe the protocol of running all fountains for 30 seconds each morning before student use. Two water fountains at Chemainus Elementary have also been decommissioned pending further testing.

In addition to implementing flushing protocols and continued testing and monitoring, the District is researching Autoflush Systems for schools. A replacement program for those fixtures that required 30 seconds flushing has begun.

Links to other organizations:

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water>

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