



## **INFORMATION BULLETIN WATER QUALITY UPGRADE PROGRAM**

The Greater Victoria School District No.61 is committed to ensuring that drinking water is safe and accessible in every school. In June 2016, preliminary water sampling and testing across the District indicated elevated levels of lead in several schools. Immediate steps were taken to address any possible health concerns related to exposure to lead.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

#### **How does lead get into the water?**

Lead is a metal that occurs naturally in the environment and historically was commonly used in plumbing materials. Drinking water in Greater Victoria is supplied by the Capital Regional District, and on-going water quality monitoring indicates regional drinking water continues to be of high quality and safe to drink.

It is expected that where elevated lead levels have been found in a school it is due to the materials used within the plumbing fixture, e.g. faucet, fountain or sink. Many of the schools in the district have plumbing materials that were installed prior to 1989 when the BC Plumbing Code was updated to restrict the use of lead components in water pipes and fixtures.

#### **What has been done to address this issue?**

An independent environmental consultant, recommended to the District by the Island Health Authority, was retained to test every sink and fountain in the District. The testing is complete and the detailed results are being used to identify where upgrades are required.

Every school in the Greater Victoria School District will have new filtration systems in at least two of its highest use fountains, all staff rooms, and all cooking facilities, prior to students and teachers returning to school in September. This ensures access to safe drinking water in every school.

Routine "flushing" – running of the water each morning, and twice more each day- of all fountains and sinks three times per day will also continue until all filtration systems have been installed. Flushing helps to move any standing water out of the system that could have accumulated potential contaminants over time and in most cases brings lead levels below Health Canada 10 micrograms per litre guideline.

#### **When will all upgrades be complete?**

All fountains or sinks with levels above Canadian and Provincial drinking water quality standards (10 micrograms per litre), will be equipped with a filtration system by the end of October 2016. In some cases fountains may need to be replaced, and new filtered water bottle filling stations will also be added in some schools as part of this upgrade program.

#### **How will students and teachers know which fountains and sinks have been upgraded?**

Sinks or fountains that have not yet been upgraded will be clearly marked for the benefit of all students and staff.

#### **How are these upgrades being funded?**

A program and budget for system wide testing of all schools and necessary upgrades was approved by the School District Board in June upon receiving preliminary testing results. The program remains within the approved budget of \$200,000.

*The Greater Victoria School District is proud to provide quality education for approximately 19,000 students in 27 elementary schools, 10 middle Schools, and seven secondary schools. Each year, over 50 adult learners register with our Continuing Education Program. Our District also offers a variety of programs of choice and two elementary schools of choice.*