



**Media Release  
For Immediate Release**

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**Greater Victoria School District set to install 350 new water fountains in schools**

VICTORIA, BC – The Greater Victoria School District is taking action to improve water quality in schools after the most recent findings from their annual lead analysis tests. The District is installing approximately 350 new water fountains across the District in a move to reduce lead content in the schools' drinking water.

Over a year ago, the District invested \$200,000 in water filtration systems for sinks and fountains in schools. Since then, it has been conducting inspections at one-third of its sites on an annual basis to ensure that their drinking water complies with Health Canada Guidelines for lead in drinking water. The Health Canada Guideline for lead in drinking water states that the maximum acceptable lead concentration is 0.010mg/L (10ppb).

During this year's inspection, water samples were collected from 21 schools across the District. Staff intentionally selected sites that produced higher lead concentrations during last year's tests to analyze the efficacy of the filtration systems. The latest results show there has been an improvement in reducing lead content in the water but there are still some instances of elevated traces, specifically when water has been sitting stagnant in the pipes for an extended period of time.

Staff believe that the elevated levels of lead in sitting water are associated with older water fountains that contain copper and that the lead is seeping into the water between the filter and the spigot inside the water fountain. However, once water starts to flow for 15-30 seconds and the in-line filtration system starts, the lead content quickly returns to safe levels at the majority of the sites.

"The District has taken a look at all of the options and we've decided to replace all the older fountains immediately where sitting water remains an issue," shared Superintendent Piet Langstraat. "We want to ensure that all students and staff have access to safe drinking water."

Fountain replacement will begin in early 2018. The preliminary estimated cost for the replacement of 350 fountains is \$350,000.

"When we saw the latest water quality test results, the Board of Education was quick to provide the necessary financial support required for new fountains," noted Board Chair Edith Loring-Kuhanga. "We are committed to eliminating lead in our schools' water and will be working with the Ministry to seek financial support for this retrofit."

In the meantime, students and staff have been reminded to run the tap for 15-30 seconds before drinking from the fountains. Stickers are also being placed on school fountains to remind students to run the water before drinking.

For full test results: <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2017/12/Fall-2017-Water-Testing-Results-18-December-2017.pdf>

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Lisa McPhail  
Communications & Community Engagement  
Office: 250.475.4103  
Mobile: 778.679.5049