



**Media Release  
For Immediate Release**

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

**District installs New Water Fountains and Bottle Fillers in all Schools**

**VICTORIA, BC** – Students all across the Greater Victoria School District have returned from summer break to find newly installed water fixtures in their school.

The District has been working ambitiously to reduce lead content in schools' drinking water. It has installed new water fountains, bottle fillers and in-line filtration systems in all of its schools in efforts to improve water quality.

"All 47 schools in our District now have new water fountains and at least one water bottle filler," noted Board Chair Edith Loring-Kuhanga. "Ensuring students and staff have access to safe drinking water is a priority for the Board of Education."

In 2016, the Ministry of Education mandated lead testing in schools. Following initial testing, the Board of Education started taking steps to eliminate lead particles in potable water by investing \$200,000 into new filtration systems. The new filters helped reduce lead concentrations, however, some school sites still showed elevated traces in last year's annual testing. It was determined that water sitting stagnant for an extended period of time in older fountain pipes was the cause of elevated traces in the results. Upon the discovery, the Board focused its efforts on replacing all the older water fountains.

"While most of the water fountains indicated safe lead levels after running for 15 seconds, the Board of Education felt filtered water should be immediate," added Loring-Kuhanga. "Now, with the combination of new filtration systems and fixtures, we are very optimistic there will be a significant improvement in the schools' water quality. It definitely brings a peace of mind knowing that students and staff will have safer drinking water."

Since January, the District's facilities department has been removing older fountains, installing new fountains and bringing in centralized bottle fillers to promote healthy and sustainable habits. Over the summer, staff promptly installed 47 new fountains and 63 bottle fillers, marking the completion of the water fountain replacement initiative.

Every school in the District now has new water fountains and a minimum of one bottle filler. In total, nearly 230 water fixtures and more than 40 new pre-filtration systems have been added to the schools for approximately \$850,000. The funding comes from a combination of Board of Education operating dollars with support from the Ministry of Education through our Annual Facilities Grant and the Ministry of Education's School Enhancement Program.

The District will continue to conduct tests 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). The District will start conducting tests this fall.

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