

Communiqué – March 8, 2019

## **HEALTH CANADA PUBLISHES NEW GUIDELINES FOR LEAD (Pb) CWWA Fact Sheet and Speaking Notes**

Health Canada today published revised guidelines concerning lead (Pb) in Canadian drinking water. The most significant change is the reduction of the Maximum Allowable Concentration (MAC) of lead in drinking water from 0.01 mg/L to just 0.005 mg/L. (Details on lead and the national Guidelines are in the attached Fact Sheet)

CWWA and our members, the municipal water professionals in Canada, fully support these new, science-based targets and support all efforts to one day eliminate all lead from drinking water. But we all need to recognize that these are aggressive targets that cannot be achieved overnight. There are significant challenges, mostly outside of municipal authority to address. So this will require a combined effort from federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments as well as individual property owners to achieve these targets.

Our greatest concern is how quickly these Guidelines might be implemented in each province and territory and how this might affect the public's confidence in their drinking water. We need all Canadians to understand that nothing has changed overnight regarding the safety of their water. Rather, we have agreed upon even better targets. We need the public to understand that safe drinking water leaves the treatment plant lead-free and is distributed through water mains down each street lead-free. Drinking water only comes into contact with lead when it reaches the service line from the water main to an individual property and/or in the plumbing and fixtures within individual homes and buildings. As the use of lead service lines was phased out in the 1960's, this only affects older homes in older neighbourhoods.

So the bulk of our lead issue lies on or within private property, outside of the road allowance and municipal authority. Aside from the significant cost and disruption to replace lead service lines, our greatest challenge is to engage the individual property owners to cooperate with municipal utilities to replace lead service lines and to address any other plumbing within their building.

To support our members in speaking about these Guidelines to their Council, their customers or the media, CWWA has prepared a **Fact Sheet and Speaking Notes**. The Fact Sheet provides general details about Lead and the Guidelines, but more detail can be attained from Health Canada or your local public health authority. The Speaking Notes outline our key points we need to make as municipal water professionals. We encourage members to use these speaking notes and to share these tools with their Communications staff and municipal Council.

The Fact Sheet and Speaking Notes are attached with this Communiqué or can be found on our website [www.cwwa.ca](http://www.cwwa.ca)

We also hope to post links to communications materials and strategies from our members, so we encourage our members to share these links with us.