



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

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Brenda Korbee  
Senior Advisor, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change  
Drinking Water Management Division  
[Brenda.korbee@ontario.ca](mailto:Brenda.korbee@ontario.ca)

Dear Ms. Korbee,

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) appreciates the opportunity to respond to this consultation regarding proposed amendments to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Safe Drinking Water Act, Ontario Regulation 243. These changes could significantly impact costs and operations at our schools as well as the child care centres located in our buildings.

We share the Ministry's overarching principle of providing safe drinking water and monitoring lead levels. We want to ensure that our schools and facilities are safe learning and work environments for our students and our staff. Our feedback is based on commentary from our member boards and their Health & Safety managers. We believe this echoes the comments you have already received from the Ontario Association of School Business Officials' (OASBO) Operations, Maintenance & Construction Committee (OMC).

In addition to the questions posed in your consultation document, we are also seeking responses or information to the following:

- What precipitated the need to update/change the regulation?
- Is there Canadian data regarding lead exposure in drinking water?
- How are local public health units being connected?
- Can there be more description and detail about drinking water taps as opposed to those used for other purposes (i.e. art, science, technical rooms). The notion is that children, especially elementary, may drink from taps not intended for drinking.
- Some water fountains have both the drinking fixture as well as a bottle fill station. Do these both apply under the regulation?

Thank you for considering our comments and those made directly by school boards. We would also like to acknowledge our appreciation for the extension of this consultation deadline.

Sincerely,

Laurie French, President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc.

The Honorable Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education  
Bruce Rodrigues, Deputy Minister of Education

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) represents public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario. Together our members serve the educational needs of almost 70% of Ontario's elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA believes that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality, or religious affiliation.

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**Q6. Do you agree with the proposed requirement that, by January 1, 2019, day nurseries/child care centres and primary schools (public and private) must have tested for lead at all drinking water fountains, all taps used in the preparation of food or drink and all taps used to provide drinking water to children? Do you agree with the proposed requirement that, by January 1, 2022, other schools (public and private) must have tested for lead at all drinking water fountains, all taps used in the preparation of food or drink and all taps used to provide drinking water to children?**

- Timelines are not sufficient, extension would be required.
- Boards need time to collect an inventory of all water fountains, taps and sinks. A proper inventory of designated drinking fountains/sources is required to accurately determine the total number of samples to be collected and analyzed.

**Q7. What are the impacts to day nurseries/child care centres and primary schools (public and private) to test all their drinking water fountains and taps used to prepare food or drink, or to provide drinking water to children by January 1, 2019, as proposed?**

- The biggest impact is financial. Our member boards vary in size and some of the larger boards would experience huge increases to their current costs in order to conduct all samples and meet testing requirements.
- Increase in administrative work -- tracking and documentation.
- Board budgets will not have captured these additional costs.

**Q8. What are the impacts to other schools (public and private) to test all their drinking water fountains and taps used to prepare food or drink, or to provide drinking water to children by January 1, 2022, as proposed?**

- Similar impacts as noted in Q7.

**Q9. Do you agree with the proposed amendments to allow the use of filters or other devices certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53, 58, 62 or equivalent for lead removal on taps and fountains in schools and day nurseries/child care centres?**

- Not all boards use filters.
- Filters are an expensive option.

- Concern expressed if filters were to be mandated and their additional cost for purchase, replacement and administrative work load tracking filter installation etc.
- Need to compare cost of ongoing filter use versus fixture replacement.

**Q10. Do you agree with keeping the current flushing requirements except in cases where the most recent standing sample results are below 1 µg/L?**

- No comment

**Q11. The sampling window (May 1 to October 31) for lead would not change, since the warmer months of the year are when lead is more likely to be released from the plumbing system into the water. However, more samples would be required as a result of the proposed regulatory changes. Do you foresee any challenges with having to submit more samples for testing within the existing sampling window?**

- Boards would like to see some flexibility in the sampling window. Many would request to extend the window to allow time to sample the increased number of locations if need be.
- Any extension could also spread the workload at MOECC approved laboratories

**Q 12. Do you agree that if a lead exceedance has been found in the flushed sample result from a tap or drinking water fountain, that the school or day nursery/child care centre would be required to immediately take corrective action (e.g. filtering, flushing, rendering the tap or fountain inaccessible to children) until the result from a flushed sample from that location is below the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standard for Lead?**

- Yes, immediate action should be taken
- Concern expressed that any action taken applies to the fixture itself and not the entire building.
- School boards work with their local public health units on necessary actions. Would this change?

**Q13. What are the impacts to decreasing the timeframe for labs to provide drinking water test results to the ministry from 28 to seven days?**

- Decreasing from 4 weeks to 1 week seems to be a dramatic change in length. Is this a realistic turnaround time for labs?
- Would this result in increased fees?

**Q14. Do you foresee any challenges for labs to make accessible to the ministry results from tests they are licensed to analyze, including pesticides?**

- No comment.