



Canadian
Environmental Law
Association
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GET THE LEAD OUT OF DRINKING WATER! IT'S TIME FOR ONTARIO TO MEET HEALTH CANADA'S GUIDELINES

OBJECTIVE

There is no safe level of lead for human consumption.

In 2019, Health Canada lowered the Maximum Acceptable Concentration (MAC) for lead in drinking water to 5 µg/L. Ontario's standard remains at 10 µg/L and it's **time for that to change**.

To get the lead out of our drinking water and protect the people in this province, we need to amend regulations to **lower the MAC for lead in drinking water**, and urgently **replace pipes that deliver lead** from tap to cup.





SUMMARY

Lead exposure can cause significant harm to human health, particularly in vulnerable populations, for children, and babies in utero. Drinking water that contains even small amounts of lead, for any length of time, can be a health risk for consumers.

The effects of lead and human health are studied based on blood lead levels (BLLs). Lead exposure has been confirmed to cause reduced cognitive capabilities, increases in blood pressure and renal dysfunction in adults. Young children are more sensitive to the effects of lead because they are still developing, both cognitively and physically, and their bodies absorb lead at higher rates than adults. High lead exposure and BLLs in children have been associated with reductions in intelligence quotients (IQ) levels and neurodevelopmental impacts.

In 2019, Health Canada reduced the Maximum Allowable Concentration (“MAC”) recommendation for lead drinking water from 10 µg/L to 5 µg/L. However, there is no known safe level for lead.

Limiting lead exposure as much as is reasonably possible is the only way to protect the health of people in Ontario and the environment.

In Ontario, drinking water in many homes exceeds the higher provincial lead in drinking water standard of 10 µg/L due to outdated lead service lines, with no current provincial requirements for operators to ensure safety standards are met. There is also a lack of a mandatory alert system for at-risk residents and no interim provincial support programs available. The burden of protecting against lead exposure falls mainly on local municipalities and individuals, leaving too many households, schools, and daycares vulnerable to health risks.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Ontario must lower the Maximum Allowable Concentration of lead in drinking water to 5 µg/L.**
- 2) Municipalities must take immediate action to replace lead service lines that deliver contaminated water to people in Ontario.**

For questions or more information, please contact Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director, CELA, 416-960-2284 ext. 7219 or theresa@cela.ca