



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Pacific Rim School District Takes Proactive Steps to Address Lead Levels Detected in Water Systems at Certain School Locations**

**Port Alberni, BC, November 20, 2024** – Recent water testing within the Pacific Rim School District has indicated that certain tap locations within school district facilities, exceed 0.005 mg/L, the Maximum Allowable Concentration (MAC) level of lead in water, as set by Health Canada.

All schools within the school district continue to have multiple unaffected tap locations available for drinking water. The health and well-being of our students and staff are our top priority, and as such we are taking all necessary actions to address this matter promptly.

The Pacific Rim School District has informed both the Ministry of Education and Child Care and our regional health authority (Island Health) of the test results. In collaboration with Island Health, we have implemented a series of proactive steps to mitigate any potential exposure to lead. These steps are being carried out in alignment with guidelines provided by both organizations, to ensure that all necessary safety standards are met and maintained.

As recommended by Island Environmental Health and Safety Ltd. (Island EHS) in most tap locations, the implementation of a daily morning flushing program is sufficient to reliably reduce the concentration of lead to below MAC levels. This will be performed by each school's administration prior to the start of school each day, to ensure that students have safe access to water upon their arrival.

At tap locations where flushing alone is not sufficient, taps have been shut off until in-line filtration systems can be installed just before the point of use, which is expected to be completed within the next two weeks. Following the installation of NSF / ANSI 53 certified filtration systems at these tap locations, subsequent testing will be done to confirm that lead levels have been brought within acceptable MAC limits.

Signage has been placed at all affected tap locations, and as an additional cautionary measure, at tap locations that have not yet been tested.

To further reinforce our commitment to guaranteeing safe learning environments for every student and staff member, the Pacific Rim School District has contracted Island EHS to conduct immediate testing across all district facilities, that have not yet been tested as part of the regular requirements. This rigorous testing process is expected to be complete by the end of December, with results being made available to the public on the district's website upon completion.

In the ordinary course, a minimum of 1/3 (or 33%) of the school facilities in a school district's inventory must be tested each year on a rotating basis. In addition to the above-mentioned immediate mitigation strategies, the school district will continue to engage contracted services to



conduct regularly scheduled water testing, in accordance with the Ministry of Education's directive. (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/testing-lead-content-in-drinking-water>) This means that in January 2025, we will continue our testing regime on a rotating basis as applicable.

Additionally, a new page will be added to the school district's website, dedicated to providing annual water testing results for members of the public to view. Requests for funding to replace pipes, fixtures and fittings between the water main and the affected taps will be submitted as part of the district's future Capital Planning submissions.

The safety of our students and staff remains our utmost priority, and we are committed to ongoing transparency with our community as we address this matter. We will continue to work closely with Island Health, Island EHS and the Ministry of Education and Child Care to ensure that all necessary health and safety protocols are followed.

For more information on lead in drinking water, please see the following Health Link BC link: (<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water>)

Contact Information for Island Health is as follows:

Island Health  
Environmental Public Health  
Address: 4201 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Port Alberni, BC V9Y 4N1  
Tel: 250-731-1355  
Em: [HPES.PortAlberni@islandhealth.ca](mailto:HPES.PortAlberni@islandhealth.ca)

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Pacific Rim School District | (250) 720-2770 | [pmason@sd70.bc.ca](mailto:pmason@sd70.bc.ca)

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We would like to thank the community for your understanding and support as we work together to navigate this situation. Your trust and patience mean a great deal to us, and we are grateful for your partnership as we take the necessary steps to ensure a safe environment for everyone.

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### **About Pacific Rim School District**

The Pacific Rim School District, situated on the ɥaɥuuti of the cīšaaʔath, Hupačasath, Tla-o-qui-aht, Yuuʔuʔitʔath and Huu-ay-aht First Nations, serves a regional population of approximately 31,000 people, including 4,000 students from across Port Alberni, Tofino, Ucluelet, Bamfield and other remote communities. [www.sd70.bc.ca](http://www.sd70.bc.ca)