Edzanèk'e Gots'ǫ
Ek'èteht sodǫ
Łegehdì Kǫ

MEETING SD 91-20-25

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 10, 2025
DET'ANCHOGH KǪ́É - EAGLE ROOM
6:30 PM

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

2. Prayer/reflection

3. Review and Adoption of Agenda

4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

5. In Camera Matters
   a) Lead contamination in NWT schools

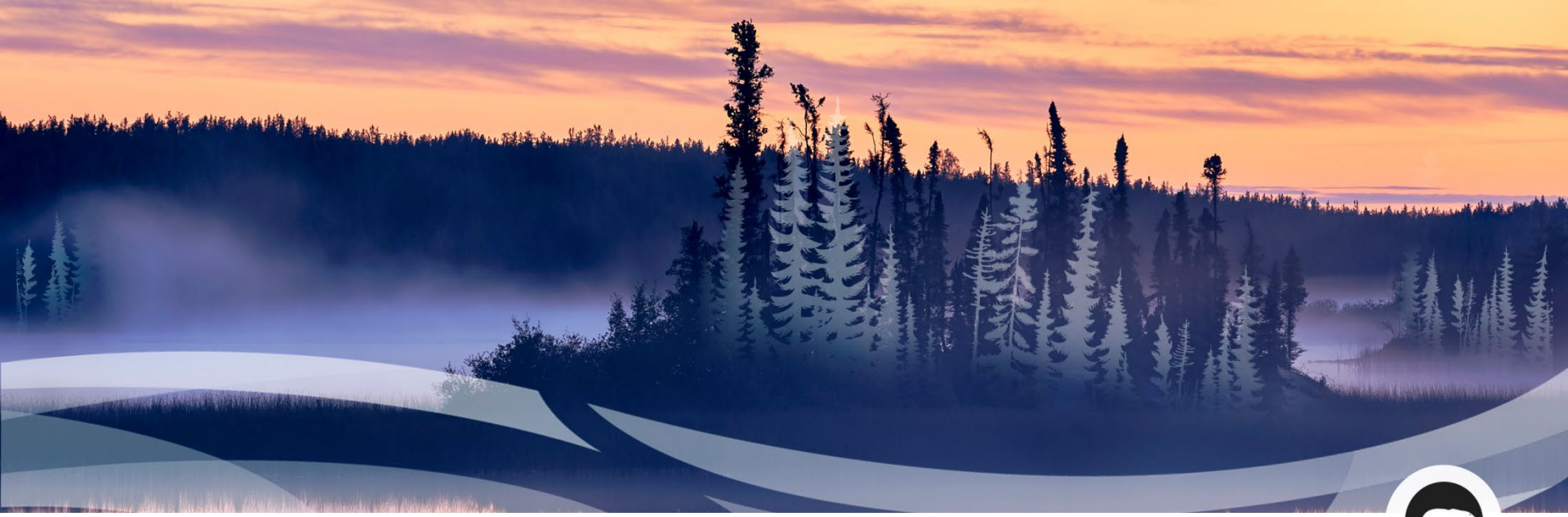
6. Public Matters
   a) Public briefing on lead contamination in NWT schools with ECE Minister Cleveland, HSS Minister Semmler and INF Minister McKay

7. In Camera Matters
   a) Debrief
   b) SCOSD workplan

8. New Business
   a)

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting:
   a) TBD

10. Adjournment



Lead Testing at NWT Schools

Ministerial Briefing to Standing Committee on Social Development
December 10, 2025

Government of
Northwest Territories

Outline

- Background
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Current Operating Procedures
- Sampling Procedures
- Communications
- Where is the lead coming from?
- Remediation
- Where are we now?

Background

- In 2019, Health Canada set out a new guideline for lead in drinking water - 0.01 mg/L to 0.005 mg/L
- ECE and INF developed a proactive pilot testing program
- Screening to identify elevated lead levels that may require comprehensive testing
- Protocol followed ALS Canada Ltd.'s procedures
- Aligned with the NWT Drinking Water Sampling and Testing Requirements

Background

- A territory-wide testing protocol was launched in October 2025:
  - Clear, consistent and science-based approach to sampling and testing water
  - Approved by the OCPHO
  - Schools range in age from 3 years old to 68 years old, and have undergone a variety of retrofits and renovations
  - All schools will undergo testing
  - Sequence of school testing is based on preview of previous testing, facility age, number and age of students, and other public health and mechanical factors
  - If elevated levels of lead are found, immediate action is taken
- Alternate sources of drinking water were offered by the GNWT
- Testing to be completed by the end of the 2025-26 school year

Background

- Schools are being prioritized ahead of other GNWT assets because children are an at-risk population for health outcomes related to lead exposure
- After school testing is complete, the GNWT will do a risk assessment to determine which other GNWT buildings must also undergo water testing
- This issue is not limited to GNWT buildings, or the territory – this is an issue being addressed Canada-wide

Roles & Responsibilities

Interdepartmental WG (ECE, INF, HSS, MACA, Comms)

1. Establish lead sampling protocol
2. Develop lead sampling plan and schedule
3. Verify sampling protocol alignment with best practices
4. Provide technical advice
5. Provide recommendations for mitigation actions

Steering Committee (ECE, INF, HSS, MACA, Comms)

1. Approve sampling protocol
2. Approve sampling plan and schedule
3. Approve/ provide funding direction for mitigation measures
4. Communicate results to stakeholders

INF/MACA:

1. Sample collection and training personnel
2. Review and analyze results
3. Isolate issue and develop mitigation
4. Implement mitigation approach (INF)

OCPHO:

1. Responsible for issuing final approval of sampling plan
2. Review and approve proposed mitigation measures
3. Responsible for taking protective public health actions including issuing Public Health Orders

Current Operating Procedures

Pre-testing

- Determine and publish upcoming school testing schedule
- Work with the school on coordination of testing

Post-testing

- GNWT Working Group receives and analyses water testing results
- CPHO determines if a Public Health Order is required, and if so, the Superintendent is notified
- Ensure appropriate signage is in place for affected fixtures per public health direction and implement any short-term recommendations from Working Group
- INF analyzes results and outlines findings and proposed solutions, including cost estimates as necessary
- INF implements remediation solution

Sampling Procedures

Tier 1 Sample
- Collected after 8 hours of stagnation (overnight)
- Represents lead that may leach into water from plumbing when water sits unused

General Chemistry Sample
- Collected after flushing the tap for 5 minutes, prior to stagnation
- Represents a baseline for a clean system

Tier 2 Sample
- Collected after flushing the tap for 5 minutes, followed by 30 minutes of stagnation
- Reflect typical water use during the day and represent lead exposure under regular conditions
- CPHO focuses on these results to assess human health risk

Communications

- Ongoing Public Service Announcements following testing results above MAC
- Direct communication to schools for them to share with students, families and staff
- Lead Testing in JK-12 School Drinking Water webpage is regularly updated and includes:
  - Schools scheduled for testing
  - How the testing works
  - Actions under the protocol
  - Testing results
  - Information about lead and health

Where is the lead coming from?

- Coming from building plumbing, not municipal drinking water
  - Sampling of municipal water is conducted regularly by community governments, no tests have shown presence of lead in municipal drinking water
  - During school water testing, samples of water representative of municipal supply are taken, and also indicate no lead
- Two main sources: older brass fixtures (pre-2014) and older pipe solder (pre-1990)

Sources

1. **Brass Fixtures**
   - Certified low-lead plumbing fixtures came into effect in Canada in 2014, requiring brass fitting to have a weighted average of no more than 0.25% lead content for drinking water systems
   - Older materials were allowed up to 8% lead content
2. **Pipe Solder**
   - Banned officially in 1986, but published in the 1990 National Plumbing Code
   - Provided time to ensure stock was removed from supply chain
   - Still allowed to contain 0.2% lead content – under certain conditions, could still result in lead leaching

Remediation

- Difficult to identify exact pipe or fitting in a plumbing system
- Requires continued testing and eliminating potential sources
- Once the source is isolated, it can be mitigated by:
  - replacing plumbing fixtures
  - replacing piping
  - decommissioning unused fixtures
  - installing filters
  - implementing a flushing protocol, or
  - some combination of those approaches
- Testing is continued until it is certain that the problem has been resolved

Where are we now?

- Continue to implement the territory-wide JK-12 school water testing, and remediation solutions.
- **As of December 10, 2025:**
  - 13 schools have been tested
  - Of the 13, results have been analyzed for 8 schools, and 6 had Public Health Orders due to elevated lead levels
  - 4 Active Orders remain, and 1 Maintenance and Monitoring Order remains
  - 2 additional schools are anticipated to have testing completed before the winter holidays (December 11, 2025)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Questions?