



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CITY ISSUES FLUSHING REMINDER FOR RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES THAT MAY CONTAIN LEAD IN PRIVATE HOME/COMMERCIAL PLUMBING

**AUGUST 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – PRINCE RUPERT, B.C.** – The City would like to issue a reminder to the community that, as a precautionary measure, if you do not know for certain that your plumbing does not contain lead you should run a tap in your home or business for one or two minutes until it runs cold any time that water is left to sit in your pipes. Flushing your home water system in this way will help to ensure you are receiving a fresh source of water from beyond the home.

Recent water quality testing conducted by the City in conjunction with Northern Health was completed in just over 60 homes throughout Prince Rupert. This testing has revealed that approximately 10 homes of those tested had elevated levels of lead due to leaching from residential home plumbing systems. Samples were taken in the morning on the 'first flush' from the tap, after the water was left to sit overnight, so it should be noted that these levels are not representative of the water being drawn through the tap throughout the day once stagnant water has cleared. Letters have now been sent provided to affected residents and building owners, and homes with elevated levels are being contacted and provided the opportunity for secondary testing to help determine the source of lead within the home.

This higher proportion of homes with noted issues has highlighted the need for additional public messaging, with this notice being accompanied by a video available on the City's social media platforms and Youtube channel. Due to the prevalence of lead in home plumbing solder prior to 1989 (and lead content in fixtures further reduced in 2012), combined with the age of Prince Rupert's housing stock, it is possible that many homes throughout the community may have some level of exposure to lead through home plumbing. A similar notice was provided and mailed to all residences in the community in August of 2018, however given these test results, we would like to reiterate the importance of flushing, filtering water, and/or replacing home/commercial plumbing containing lead to avoid possible exposure.

It is important to note that regular samples collected from testing stations within Prince Rupert's community water system show lead results well below Federal and Provincial standards (with the average test collected in recent years showing 0.00038 mg/L, and the newly lowered Maximum Allowable Concentration being 0.05 mg/L). These results are publically available through the Northern Health website and are posted regularly at [https://www.healthspace.ca/Clients/NHA/NHA\\_Website.nsf](https://www.healthspace.ca/Clients/NHA/NHA_Website.nsf). In addition, the City does not have lead service lines within municipal infrastructure, and have not encountered lead service lines on private property. Recent test results support the absence of municipal lead service lines, as residences with elevated levels were broadly dispersed within the community, and not in one or two 'problem' areas that could be tied to underground infrastructure.

For our part, the City is working diligently to improve water quality, including on future measures to mitigate potential lead leaching. We have been working since 2014 to obtain funding to replace critical water supply infrastructure, including our 100 year old dam, water conveyance line and access road, and more recently to develop a water treatment facility. This week, we were notified that we were successful

in achieving \$22 million in funding for the final phase of the water project, which includes replacement of the submarine line carrying water beneath the harbour, and development of a state of the art water treatment facility. The treatment system as proposed would include multiple barriers of treatment, which will help to address the coastal issue of low pH and subsequent lead leaching in private plumbing infrastructure. Still, there remains a possibility of lead leaching into a home's tap water unless lead plumbing components are replaced entirely, or flushing is conducted. We encourage people where possible to consider replacing all plumbing components containing lead, or to continue to conduct regular flushing until such time as replacement is feasible.

#### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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