

November 5, 2019

Community & Fire Services Commission

Subject Title: City of Markham Drinking Water Quality & FAQs on Lead**Purpose**

This briefing note provides information in response to the [Toronto Star article published on November 4, 2019](#) on lead levels in Canadian drinking water and details the quality of Markham's tap water with regards to this concern.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**What is the estimated number of private or public lead services in the City of Markham?**

There are NO known lead public service lines in the City of Markham. The City has not encountered any lead issues in City drinking water.

1. Which residents would be at risk of having lead issues?

As per the Ontario Ministry of Environment publication "Lead in Drinking Water December 2007:"

- Older homes built prior to the mid-1950s are more likely to have lead pipes and service lines.
- If your home was built between the mid-1950s and 1989, you likely don't have lead pipes or service lines, but there might be lead in some fixtures or solder used to connect your pipes.
- Homes built after 1989 are unlikely to have any lead in pipes, service lines, solder or joints.

If you suspect that your home has lead service, contact the City of Markham Contact Centre at 905.477.5530 or customerservice@markham.ca and the Environmental Services Department will conduct an investigation and determine if a lead test is required.

2. Who is the governing body that regulates for lead sampling in Ontario and what is the standard requirement?

Sampling for lead is regulated by the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), as outlined in Ontario Regulation 170/03 Drinking Water Systems.

The Ontario Drinking Water Standard for lead is 10 parts per billion (ppb).

3. Does the City of Markham currently take any lead samples on the public side of the infrastructure?

November 5, 2019

Community & Fire Services Commission

Yes, distribution samples are taken twice a year throughout the City of Markham and tested for lead according to the requirements under the regulations. The results showed no exceedances in the past since the Community Lead Sampling Program began in 2007.

4. Has the City of Markham tested on the private side of plumbing service for lead and what was the result?

The City of Markham has conducted residential plumbing and non-residential sampling as per all regulations since December 2007.

There were approximately 1, 400 lead samples taken since 2007 to 2011 and there have been no samples that have exceeded the limit of the Ontario Drinking Water Standard. All samples results did not show elevated lead levels and were all found to be safe.

Because the results from 2007 to 2011 showed our water was safe and free of lead, the City of Markham received regulatory relief from lead sampling for plumbing serving private residences and plumbing from non-residential buildings between December 2011 to October 2021.

5. When taking samples from residential or non-residential plumbing, is the water flushed prior to taking a sample?

As per the Safe Drinking Water Act, Ontario Regulation 170/03, the sample is taken from the location most commonly used to provide water for human consumption. The tap is turned on for 5 minutes. The tap is then turned off for 30 minutes and, then the samples are taken immediately.

6. Are Aerators removed prior to sampling?

If the tap from which samples are to be taken has an aerator, the aerator is not removed while the samples are being taken as required by the regulation.

7. Does the City of Markham have a Corrosion Control Plan to treat the drinking water?

The City of Markham does not have corrosive water that will degrade our pipes; therefore, does not require a corrosion control plan. The City of Markham is a distribution system only and we receive treated water from the City of Toronto. The City of Toronto has had a Corrosion Control Plan in place since March 2014, which includes phosphate (as orthophosphate) dosing to 1.75 mg/L. Phosphorous is naturally present in food (such as milk, nuts and beef) and has no impact on drinking water quality in Markham.

November 5, 2019

Community & Fire Services Commission

8. Where can I see the results for the lead samples taken in Markham?

Results for lead sampling are available markham.ca by searching Markham's annual 'Water Quality Report.'

9. How can I check if my home has a lead service?

Locate your water meter, typically found in the basement, and look at the pipe coming up through the basement floor into the bottom of the water meter. Lead is grey, does not echo if you gently strike it, scratches easily and leaves metallic marks when you rub the scratched area against paper.

10. What should I do if I suspect I have a lead service and want to have a lead test completed?

Contact the City of Markham Contact Centre at 905.477.5530 or customerservice@markham.ca and the Environmental Services Department will investigate the existing pipes that services your home and determine if a lead test is required. If determined that a lead test is required, the City will conduct the test on behalf of the resident and report the results.

11. Does the City of Markham provide filters to remove lead?

No, filters are not provided by the City of Markham.

12. Does the City of Markham provide sample kits to residents?

No, sample kits are not provided by the City of Markham.

13. How can I reduce lead in my drinking water?

If you suspect your home plumbing to contain lead, a good practice would be to flush out standing water. After water has been standing in plumbing for a long time, overnight or during the day when home occupants are away, run your taps before drinking water from them. Allow the water to run until it is noticeably cooler and then continue running the water for five minutes. Save the water you run during this process for plant watering or washing the dishes.