



JULY 2, 2025

REPORT

INVESTIGATION INTO THE TESTING PROGRAM FOR DRINKING WATER IN
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SCHOOLS

THOMAS ADR

INTRODUCTION

In late 2024 the Department of Education Culture and Employment undertook a water testing program with support from the Department of Infrastructure, as well as two Yellowknife School Boards.

On May 27, 2025, staff and parents/guardians with children in two Yellowknife schools received a letter, informing them that elevated levels of lead had been detected in drinking water in these facilities.¹

After this information was released, concerns were raised regarding the appearance of a delay between when the testing results were received and when relevant parties were notified. Concerns were also raised regarding communication challenges between the Department of Education Culture and Employment and the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer.

I was retained to investigate this situation, and to:

- Provide a timeline of events, including actions taken and decisions made, leading up to the May 27th letter;
- Identify procedural gaps and issues, including communication issues and challenges; and
- Make recommendations to address the issues identified.

As I was specifically directed not to make findings of fault; I have not identified any individuals in the narrative portion of this report. I have identified position titles or the sources of information if this information is relevant to my findings.

Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of July, 2025 by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cayley Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cayley" and last name "Thomas" clearly distinguishable.

Cayley Thomas, B.A., LL.B., LL.M.

Thomas ADR,
Yellowknife, NWT

¹ A copy of this letter can be found on the Yellowknife District Education Authority No. 1 web page at <https://www.yk1.nt.ca/ci/p/9251>.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department of Education Culture and Employment (“ECE”) has overall responsibility for education in the Northwest Territories. Capital planning for school facilities is handled within the Corporate Services Branch of ECE, but ECE does not maintain or operate the schools.

The Department of Infrastructure (“INF”) is responsible for the facility operations and maintenance of NWT schools; except schools falling under the authority of Yellowknife Catholic Schools (“YCS”) and Yellowknife Education Division No. 1 (“YK1”).

YCS and YK1 operate and maintain nine schools. All the schools are located in Yellowknife. The two schools identified in the May 27, 2025 letter, as having elevated levels of lead in their drinking water, were schools operated and maintained by YK1.

The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (the “OCPHO”) is administratively located within the Department of Health and Social Services (“DHSS”). The Chief Public Health Officer supervises the Environmental Health Unit, which provides expertise and leadership to the Government of the Northwest Territories, non-governmental organizations, and the public. Their expertise covers interpretation of the *Public Health Act* and Regulations, policies, and procedures related to public health, including drinking water.

The Maximum Allowable Concentration (the “MAC”) for lead in drinking water in Canada is .005 mg/L.

In 2018, individuals from the ECE and DHSS identified the need to test schools annually for lead in drinking water. Initial planning and costing estimates were prepared by ECE and INF for a “spot sampling” project; however, this project did not proceed.

INVESTIGATION PROCESS

I interviewed 12 individuals during this investigation:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I conducted in-person, confidential, one-on-one interviews with each individual.² During the interviews, I asked each person to; provide information about their involvement in the testing program, identify issues they observed, and tell me what they would do, or recommend be done, to avoid similar issues in the future.

In addition to conducting interviews, I also reviewed documentary evidence (much of which consisted of internal e-mail communication) related to this situation. Where information was unclear, or appeared inconsistent with information provided from another source, I requested clarification from the individuals involved.

² Staff from the OCPHO were interviewed as a group; at the request of the

NARRATIVE TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Based on interviews and my review of documentation related to this situation, I believe the following narrative accurately sets out the steps taken, and decisions made, leading up to the May 27th letter. A point form timeline of events is also attached, as an Appendix to this Report.

Planning:

In early 2024, the [REDACTED] ECE, ECE, became aware that lead had been detected in the drinking water in Yukon schools. Although ECE is not responsible for the operation and maintenance of schools, ECE reached out to INF, YK1 and YCS to see if there were any records related to testing for lead in drinking water. INF provided information regarding the 2018 spot sampling program that was never implemented.

In October 2024, the [REDACTED] ECE requested, and received, approval to conduct single sample testing of NWT schools, based on the methodology developed for the 2018 testing program. Because the estimated cost for conducting the tests and compiling the results was less than \$8,000.00, and this was seen as a pro-active step towards addressing an operational gap, ECE funded this activity internally, and few questions were asked.

The individuals involved in this activity did not consider this initiative a “pilot project” or a “testing program”. It was seen, by both operational and managerial staff in ECE and INF, as an “information gathering process” or “preliminary research” to be used for future decision making. For this reason, and because no project plan was created, I have referred to the ‘testing program’ as an “initiative” in this report.

To the extent that there was a plan for the testing initiative, the plan was:

- INF would procure water sample kits from a commercial lab, distribute the kits, submit the water samples, and compile the results for ECE;
- INF would obtain one water sample from each of the schools it maintained; YCS and YK1 would obtain samples from each of the schools they maintained;³ If any test results seemed high, they would be re-sampled and re-tested; and
- Once all the results were received, next steps would be determined by ECE.

³ Schools that were recently constructed or significantly renovated were not included in this plan.

On November 15, 2024, ECE informed the educational body [REDACTED] YK1 & YCS that ECE, in collaboration with INF, had developed a testing plan for the existence of lead in the drinking water of all NWT schools, and that an update would be provided at their next meeting in January.⁴

Testing and Receipt of Results:

INF distributed the water sample kits in early December 2024.

On December 13, 2024, the OCPHO contacted ECE, inquiring about their plan to test drinking water in schools.

On December 17, 2024, the [REDACTED] ECE responded to the OCPHO's questions and informed the OCPHO that ECE intended to gather all the test results before reporting.

Later that day, the OCPHO re-iterated their desire to be kept in the loop, and specifically asked to be informed if any of the test results exceed the MAC, "...as these may require prompt action from our unit in conjunction with the Chief Public Health Officer".

The [REDACTED] ECE - all redactions in this paragraph

[REDACTED] directly involved in, the testing initiative. [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] provided [REDACTED] with a summary of ongoing projects, noting that [REDACTED] staff would provide an update on water testing in schools in mid-January. [REDACTED] also informed [REDACTED] that, "... [The] Public Health office [is] aware of the testing program and can provide support in messaging final results or if there are any concerns..."

While the above statement is accurate, it became apparent during this investigation that the OCPHO had only cursory knowledge of the testing initiative. The OCPHO was not consulted when ECE revived the 2018 spot testing program, and they had not asked and/or received answers to questions which likely would have identified issues with methodology, communications, and mitigation activities.

On January 16, 2025, INF received test results, indicating that samples taken in three YK1 schools exceeded the MAC for lead in drinking water. These schools were:

Ecole William McDonald Middle School .0085 mg/L

Range Lake North School .02569 mg/L

NJ Macpherson Annex .0068 mg/L

INF shared these results with ECE on January 22, 2025. At that time, ECE and INF made an operational level decision to wait until all the test results were received before re-sampling and re-testing water in schools with high results. This decision was based on an expectation that the outstanding test results would be received promptly, and that a bulk order of sample kits might be required for re-testing.

⁴ No update was provided in January because results weren't available to ECE until after the meetings began.

On February 24, 2025, after additional results were received, INF contacted the YK1 and YCS [REDACTED] and asked them to pick up additional test kits, as some of the test results were high and needed to be re-tested.⁵

YK1 [REDACTED] staff obtained samples from the schools on March 11th. The re-test results, returned on March 20th, showed that the drinking water samples from two schools still exceeded the MAC of .005 mg/L. The re- test results were:

Ecole William McDonald Middle School .00903 mg/L

Range Lake North School .025 mg/L

NJ Macpherson Annex .00266 mg/L

Neither the results received in January, nor the results received on March 20, 2025 were reported to the OCPHO as they had requested. These results were not flagged for management's attention in either ECE or INF.

On April 3, 2025, the OCPHO requested an update in the testing initiative. On April 7th, ECE provided a spreadsheet and informed the OCHPO that they were still awaiting some results. On April 29th, ECE provided an additional spreadsheet, showing 46 test results, and three re-test results. Only samples from Ecole William McDonald Middle School and Range Lake North School exceeded the MAC for lead in drinking water.

During their interview, the OCPHO staff indicated that the results they received in April were not what they were expecting. They expected to see multiple test results for each school, and expected to see details regarding the location and time of day for each sample taken.

Communication with the OCPHO Regarding Re-testing / Next Steps:

On April 30, 2025, the OCPHO advised ECE, by e-mail, that the [REDACTED] OCPHO had reviewed the test results, and recommended further investigation, "*as soon as practicable*" into the two schools that were re-tested. Attached to the OCPHO's e-mail, as a resource, was an 8-page document entitled, *Testing for Lead in School Drinking Water: A Summary of Sampling Protocols*.⁶ One of the tables in this document identified Health Canada's recommendation that all sources of drinking water be tested at least once a year, in June or October. Another table contains Health Canada's recommended

⁵ INF asked YCS to re-test one school, which was below the MAC for lead in drinking water. It does not appear this re-test was completed.

⁶ This document can be found on the following page: <https://ncceh.ca/resources/evidence-reviews/testing-lead-school-drinking-water-summary-sampling-protocols>.

procedure for collecting water samples, and for collecting additional water samples if two-stage collection is warranted.

The OCPHO indicated, during this investigation, that Health Canada's protocols were considered the "gold standard"; and they expected Health Canada's recommended testing procedures, summarized in the tables in this document, would be followed when the two schools were re-tested.

On May 8, 2025, the [REDACTED] OCPHO - this paragraph all [REDACTED] followed up with the operational level staff responsible for the testing initiative. [REDACTED] reiterated that the OCPHO was very concerned about the test results from the two schools from a public health perspective, and considered this matter a priority. INF responded on May 12, 2025; advising the OCPHO that the testing initiative involved a single sample from one drinking source in each school, using the testing instructions provided with the sample kits.

This is the point in time where it was, or should have been, apparent to the OCPHO that the initiative coordinated by ECE was a single source spot testing activity. This initiative was not the gold standard for testing drinking water in schools recommended by Health Canada, or expected by OCPHO.

Communication and Collaboration Between ECE, INF, the OCPHO and YK1:

On May 12, 2025, the [REDACTED] ECE - this paragraph all [REDACTED], ECE, was briefed on the school water sampling initiative and the issues that had arisen. [REDACTED] immediately brought the situation to the attention of [REDACTED]. Steps were then taken to coordinate a meeting between INF, ECE, OCPHO, and YK1. Due to scheduling issues, however; this meeting did not occur until May 21st.

On May 21, 2025, ECE, INF and YK1 met with OCPHO.⁷ During this meeting a decision was made, based on the OCPHO's recommendation, to re-test Ecole William McDonald Middle School and Range Lake North School, and to have the samples analysed on an urgent basis by a different lab.

Following this meeting:

- The message relayed to ECE and INF management, as well as the YK1 Superintendent, was that the situation was "under control", and additional testing would be conducted in the very near future; and
- The OCPHO sent correspondence to the YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] (who was responsible for collecting the samples) and ECE, regarding the recommended next steps.

The lengthy e-mail sent from the OCPHO recommended communicating the current situation with parents; but stated that an exceedance at a single sampling point is *"...not enough information to characterize the health risk, but it is enough information to indicate that there may be an issue"*. The e-mail also identified the need to re-test all sources of drinking water in the two schools and accurately record relevant information about the test samples. Rather than provide recommended sampling

⁷ The YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] was invited to this meeting, but could not attend.

procedures, the OCPHO attached three resource documents and provided links to resource materials on the US Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA") website.⁸

ECE management began to develop a communication plan which included communication with schools/parents; but they felt they required clarity from the OCPHO regarding appropriate messaging and sampling procedures, as there appeared to be inconsistencies in the information contained in the e-mail and attached documents/links.

On May 22, 2025, the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED] contacted the OCPHO, and asked for clarification regarding next steps, as well as appropriate information to relay regarding the public health risks. The OCPHO clarified that the water sources tested should not be used, an alternative water source should be provided in the two YK1 schools, and daily flushing should be implemented until more information was known. The OCPHO also provided bullet points to assist summarizing the issue and the actions, and a template for communication with parents.

It was apparent, based on interviews with individuals in ECE and the OCPHO, as well as a review of e-mail communications on May 21-22, 2025, that individuals in both offices were experiencing communication challenges at this point of time. ECE was preparing a communication package and arranging additional tests, but felt "overloaded" by the information provided by the OCPHO, and lack of what they felt was clear direction regarding next steps. The OCPHO felt they had provided plain language, audience-specific, information on both April 30th and May 21st; and believed ECE was either ignoring the information, or choosing not to follow their advice. This communication "crisis" was resolved, and the parties were able to move forward quickly and collaboratively, once the appropriate individuals were directly involved in the situation.

On Monday May 26, 2025, after senior management in ECE was fully briefed on the situation,⁹ the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED], and the [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] met virtually. Following this meeting, ECE sought clarification directly from the [REDACTED] OCPHO [REDACTED] regarding next steps, and a decision was made not to wait for further test results; to "err on the side of safety" to mitigate the risk for staff and students, and to prioritize communication.

After the end of the work day, on May 26th:

- YK1 blocked off the sources of drinking water at the two schools and arranged for bottled water to be available for staff and students the following morning;
- ECE and OCPHO personnel worked late into the night collaborating on communication to [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] of YK1, formally advising [REDACTED] of the situation, recommending next steps (which had already been implemented), and providing draft correspondence; and

⁸ The landing page for US EPA resources, provided with this e-mail can be found at this link: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water>.

⁹ The Deputy Minister had been made aware of the situation on May 22, 2025, but it was being managed within in the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED] of ECE.

- The YK1 [REDACTED] contacted the [REDACTED] of Range Lake North School and Ecole William McDonald Middle School, and asked them to send out [REDACTED] letter through the e-mail distribution system. This correspondence was sent out in the early hours of May 27, 2025.

After May 27th, two rounds of additional testing were been done. It was reported in the press that only results from Ecole William McDonald Middle School exceed the MAC for lead in drinking water, and that steps are being taken to address this situation.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Planning

The major procedural issue identified during this investigation was lack of a written project plan for sampling and testing the drinking water in schools. Had a project plan been developed:

- The objective of the testing initiative would have been apparent to the OCPHO when they asked for information in December 2024; and Health Canada's recommended procedures and protocols for testing drinking water in schools could have been shared and considered; and
- A communication plan, and/or a plan to respond to and mitigate risk, would have been in place, prior to the receipt of test results that exceeded the MAC for lead in drinking water.

Recommendation:

1. **Prioritize the development of a coordinated approach for annual testing of drinking water in all NWT schools:**

ECE should oversee the development of a project plan which includes consultation with representatives from YK1, YCS, INF and the OCPHO. This plan should include:

- i. **Clearly identified objectives, roles and responsibilities (including financial responsibilities);**
- ii. **Sampling/testing protocols and procedures;**
- iii. **Protocols and procedures to respond to and mitigate risk, if test results exceed the MAC for lead in drinking water; and**
- iv. **A communication plan, to ensure appropriate information is relayed to the appropriate individuals or organizations in a timely manner.**

Communication Regarding Health Implications of Lead in Drinking Water

There were numerous delays communicating and taking steps to address the YK1 school test results before May 27, 2025. The most significant were delays of:

- Over a month to inform YK1 that additional testing was required for three schools, and an additional month to re-sample the water in these three schools; and
- Over three months to flag the issues to ECE management, and to inform the OCPHO that both tests and re-tests for several YK1 schools exceeded the MAC for lead in drinking water.

Many factors contributed to this situation. Based on the information available to me, however; I came to the conclusion that the root cause of these delays was failure, at multiple levels, to adequately

understand the health implications of lead in school drinking water. While it is admirable that [REDACTED] ECE staff in ECE recognized a need to test school drinking water for lead, and took on this initiative; neither they, nor the operational level staff in INF, had the technical knowledge or experience to interpret, recognize the implications, or act, when results were received. Operational level staff in ECE and INF communicated with each other, and shared information; however, there was limited technical or managerial oversight of the testing initiative, and no protocol in place to “flag” the results for technical review or managerial action. It is fair to say that everyone involved in the initiative held an honest belief that the situation was “under control” – until it became apparent that it wasn’t.

Recommendations:

2. ECE should invite the OCPHO to make an educational presentation for ECE, INF and YK1/ YCS on health implications of lead in drinking water.
3. Any time *human health implications* are identified as an issue in a program, project or initiative, involving a school, daycare, or educational facility, the issue should be “flagged” and immediately brought to the attention of management.

Communication Challenges – ECE and YK1

YK1 was aware that results from three schools exceeded the MAC for lead in drinking water in February 2025, and they were aware that this was still an issue for two schools in May 2025; however, the urgency and potential impact of the situation were not fully brought to the attention of the YK1 [REDACTED] until May 26, 2025.

YK1 and YCS have responsibility for the operation and maintenance of nine schools in Yellowknife. In light of this, communication regarding sampling and test results should have occurred immediately, and directly, with the [REDACTED] YK1

Recommendation:

4. ECE should clarify the roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication, between ECE and YK1 / YCS, regarding operational and maintenance issues, including ongoing responsibility for sampling drinking water, testing, and taking actions to mitigate risks to staff and students.

Communication Challenges – OCPHO and ECE, INF and YK1

By far the biggest communication challenges identified during this investigation involved communication with the OCPHO. These challenges included:

- Miscommunication regarding the nature of the testing initiative – The OCPHO asked for, and received responses to, questions about the testing initiative in December 2024. The information shared by ECE at the time did not provide enough information for the OCPHO to

understand the objective of the testing initiative, and identify concerns with the methodology.

- Miscommunication regarding re-sampling - On April 30, 2025, the OCPHO alerted ECE to the public health concerns and recommended further testing in the two schools. Rather than set out their expectations regarding next steps, OCPHO provided a document that summarized practices and protocols from various jurisdictions and invited ECE to use this information as a reference for future testing.
- Miscommunication regarding next steps - Inability to identify the next steps prompted the meeting on May 21, 2025. After this meeting, the OCPHO followed up by providing what they felt were appropriate resources, including links to plain language educational material on the US EPA website. ECE and YK1 felt “overloaded” by the volume of material provided, and still were not sure what next steps the OCPHO was recommending. The appropriate next steps to address the potential health risks in the schools were only determined after senior ECE management spoke directly with the [REDACTED] OCPHO on May 26, 2025, and discussions regarding the interpretation of the resource materials continued for several more days.

These communication challenges could be avoided in the future if educational information is provided separately from concise recommendations or directions.

Recommendations:

5. **Any outstanding tests or re-tests should be conducted in the fall of 2025, in accordance with the direction, or under the supervision, of the OCHPO.**
6. **The OCPHO and ECE should meet, face to face, to discuss options and best practices for testing water in the future. ECE should draft a plain language document and share it with INF and YK1/YCS.**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritize the development of a coordinated approach for annual testing of drinking water in all NWT schools:

ECE should oversee the development of a project plan which includes consultation with representatives from YK1, YCS, INF and OCPHO. This plan should include:

- i. Clearly identified objectives, roles and responsibilities (including financial responsibilities);
 - ii. Sampling/testing protocols and procedures;
 - iii. Protocols and procedures to respond to and mitigate risk, if test results exceed the MAC for lead in drinking water; and
 - iv. A communication plan, to ensure appropriate information is relayed to the appropriate individuals or organizations in a timely manner.
2. ECE should invite OCPHO to make an educational presentation for ECE, INF and YK1/ YCS on health issues related to lead in drinking water.
 3. Any time *human health implications* are identified as an issue in a program, project or initiative, involving a school, daycare, or educational facility, the issue should be “flagged” and immediately brought to the attention of management.
 4. ECE should clarify the roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication, between ECE and YK1/YCS, regarding operational and maintenance issues, including ongoing responsibility for sampling drinking water, testing, and taking actions to mitigate risks to staff and students.
 5. Any outstanding tests or re-tests should be conducted in the fall of 2025, in accordance with the direction, or under the supervision, of the OCHPO.
 6. The OCPHO and ECE should meet, face to face, to discuss options and best practices for testing water in the future. ECE should draft a plain language document and share it with INF and YK1/YCS.

APPENDIX

TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

- 2018: The GNWT identifies a need, and begins taking steps, to implement a single point testing program to gather information about levels of lead in drinking water in NWT schools. This program is not implemented.
- January 2024: The [REDACTED] ECE, ECE, inquires about the 2018 program. INF provides the relevant information.
- February 2024: ECE communicates with YK1 and YCS to determine if either educational body has records related to lead testing in the schools they maintain and operate.
- August – September 2024: INF and ECE gather information regarding the logistical details, and estimated costs to test water samples, based on the 2018 program.
- October 24, 2024: ECE approves funding to conduct single point water sampling in schools. The project will be managed in the [REDACTED] ECE. Water samples will be collected by INF, YCS and YK1 staff; sent to ALS Environmental for testing; and test results will be coordinated by INF. The estimated cost to obtain and test one sample from 49 schools is less than \$8,000.00.
- November 15, 2024: ECE informs educational body Superintendents that ECE, in collaboration with INF, will be testing for the existence of lead in drinking water in NWT schools.
- November 27, 2024: INF receives sample kits.
- December 6, 2024: INF distributes sample kits to INF staff (to test schools maintained by INF) and YK1 and YCS [REDACTED] YK1 & YCS (to test schools they maintain).
- December 10, 2024: First samples are returned to INF. INF asks ECE whether test results should be provided as they are received, or whether ECE wants a spreadsheet after all the results have been received.
- December 12, 2024: ECE indicates they will wait for a full spreadsheet.
- December 13, 2024: The OCPHO reaches out to ECE, noting they have heard about the plan to test drinking water in schools for lead. They indicate they have some questions, and would like to be “looped into the conversation”. This request for information is forwarded to the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED]

- December 16, 2024: The [REDACTED] ECE, ECE, responds to the OCPHO's questions; advising that no results have been received yet, and that ECE plans to wait until all the results are received before reporting findings.
- December 17, 2024: First test results are received by INF. No results exceed the MAC.
- December 17, 2024: OCPHO acknowledges receipt of information from ECE, and asks that they be informed if any results exceed the Maximum Allowable Concentration ("MAC") for lead, as these findings may require prompt action from their office as well as the [REDACTED] ECE
- December [REDACTED] 2024: The [REDACTED] ECE - all in bullet [REDACTED] provides a written summary of outstanding projects to [REDACTED]. This document indicates that one of [REDACTED] staff will provide an update regarding progress of drinking water testing in schools by mid-January. He also advises that the "Public Health Office is aware of the testing program, and can support in messaging of final results or if there are concerns".

Unless noted; between December [REDACTED] 2024 and May 12, 2025, all communication regarding testing of drinking water in schools occurs between operational level personnel.

- January 13, 2025: ECE asks INF for an update.
- January 16, 2025: INF receives test results from YK1 schools. Results from Ecole William McDonald Middle School, Range Lake North School, and NJ Macpherson Annex exceed the MAC for lead in drinking water.
- January 22, 2025: INF provides a spreadsheet, showing 3/26 test results exceed the MAC for lead in drinking water. Four schools (including one YCS school which tested below the MAC) are flagged for re-testing. INF suggests holding off on re-tests until all results are received, as they may need to order sample kits in bulk.
- February 7, 2025: ECE requests an update.
- February 10, 2025: INF advises they are still waiting for samples to be returned from South Slave and Beaufort Delta and Dehcho schools.
- February 10, 2025: The [REDACTED] ECE, ECE, receives an e-mail update on the status of testing. The results from the three Yellowknife schools are not flagged as an issue.
- February 24, 2025: INF receives results from Beaufort Delta and Dehcho schools.
- February 24, 2025: INF contacts [REDACTED] YK1 & YCS at YK1 and YCS to inform them that some of the results came back high, and several schools need to be re-tested. They are asked to pick up additional sample kits.

- March 11, 2025: YK1 re-samples are taken.
- March 20, 2025: INF receives YK1 re-tests results. Results from NJ Macpherson School Annex are below the MAC for lead in drinking water.
- April 3, 2025: The OCPHO requests an update on the testing program.
- April 4, 2025: INF provides ECE with an updated spreadsheet of results.
- April 7, 2025: ECE provides the OCPHO with a spreadsheet setting out the test results; noting results from South Slave schools are still outstanding.
- April 29, 2025: ECE provides the OCPHO with a spreadsheet including the South Slave schools. 44 of 46 samples tested are below the MAC. Only Ecole William McDonald Middle School and Range Lake North School exceed the MAC for lead in drinking water.
- April 30, 2025: OCPHO advises ECE that the [REDACTED] OCPHO has reviewed the results provided, and recommends further investigation, “as soon as practicable”, into the two schools that were re-tested and found to exceed the MAC level. OCPHO attaches a document entitled, *Testing for Lead in School Drinking Water: A Summary of Sampling Protocols*, published by the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, and states this document can be used as a reference for future testing.
- May 5, 2025: The [REDACTED] ECE, ECE, starts.
- May 8, 2025: The [REDACTED] OCPHO, requests an update; reiterating that the results from the two YK1 schools are “very concerning from a public health perspective”. He also notes that the OCPHO has some questions relating to methodology for the testing program.
- May 12, 2025: INF responds to OCPHO’s questions regarding methodology; advising that they obtained a single sample from each facility, during school hours, and followed the testing procedures provided with the sample kits.
- May 12, 2025: The [REDACTED] ECE - all in bullet, ECE, is briefed by operational staff. [REDACTED] alerts [REDACTED] to the situation.
- May 21, 2025: An in-person meeting is held between INF, ECE and OCPHO personnel. The [REDACTED] YK1 from YK1 also attends. This is the first available date that all participants are available to meet. A decision is made during this meeting to immediately re-test the two YK1 schools, and have the results expedited by using the Taiga lab in Yellowknife.

- May 21, 2025: Following the meeting:
 - The OCPHO provides the YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] with direction to sample all water fountains and cold water taps where water is used for drinking or food preparation, and makes recommendations regarding recording sample information. The OCPHO recommends YK1 communicate the current situation with parents; stating that an exceedance at a single sampling point is “...not enough information to characterize the health risk, but it is enough information to indicate that there may be an issue”. In addition to providing a link to the US Environmental Protection Agency’s (“EPA”) landing page on resources for reducing lead in drinking water, the OCPHO provides three resource documents:
 - A “plain language” document, produced by the EPA, entitled *2-step Sampling at the Tap Guide*;
 - The document entitled, *Testing for Lead in School Drinking Water: A Summary of Sampling Protocols*, which was provided to ECE on April 30, 2025; and
 - An EPA resource on *Establishing a Lead Testing Program*.
 - The YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] is briefed by the [REDACTED] YK1 [REDACTED] regarding the need to re-test two schools; and Management, in the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED], ECE, is briefed by the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED]. ECE identifies the need to act quickly and communicate with schools/parents, but feel they require clarity from the OCPHO.
- May 22, 2025: ECE requests clarification from the OCPHO regarding access to drinking water in the two schools, messaging, as well as testing methodology.
- May 22, 2025: The OCPHO and ECE brief their respective Deputy Ministers regarding this situation.
- May 22, 2025: The OCPHO provides ECE with suggestions for communication with parents/guardians and direction to:
 - Affix signage on fixtures tested, indicating they are not in use;
 - Provide an alternate water supply;
 - Implement daily flushing until more information is known.
- May 22, 2025: The [REDACTED] OCPHO - all in bullet [REDACTED] is increasingly concerned with the lack of action, and informs [REDACTED] staff that [REDACTED] may issue a Public Health Advisory, if action isn’t taken immediately.
- May 23, 2025: Re-testing of two schools is scheduled for May 27, 2025. ECE contacts YK1 to confirm signs have been put on the water sources. The [REDACTED] OCPHO [REDACTED] has a brief conversation with the [REDACTED] ECE [REDACTED], ECE.
- May 26, 2025: ECE briefs Minister.

- May 26, 2025: [REDACTED] ECE, [REDACTED] ECE, and YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 meet virtually. A decision is made to prioritize communication with staff and parents/guardians. ECE communicates with [REDACTED] OCPHO and [REDACTED] OCPHO, who confirm they should *"take every step possible to err on the side of safety"*. This information is relayed to the YK1 [REDACTED] YK1
- May 26, 2025 (after the end of the work day): ECE management, in collaboration with the OCPHO, draft communication to the YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 formally advising of the situation, recommending next steps, and providing draft correspondence for parents/guardians. By the time this communication is received, YK1 has already blocked off the drinking sources and obtained bottled water for the two schools.
- May 27, 2025 (early in the morning): YK1 [REDACTED] YK1 contacts [REDACTED] YK1 of Ecole William McDonald Middle School and Range Lake North School, and requests correspondence be sent to staff, then to parents/guardians via the whole school distribution list. Letters are received prior to the start of the school day.