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Subject: NEW CANADIAN WATER STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN & SRS.

Canada adopts new water standards for children, seniors

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ONTARIO, Canada -- Ontario nursing homes and schools with their own drinking water systems will now be expected to meet tough new safety standards imposed recently by the provincial government here.

Nurseries, retirement homes and other social and health care facilities that house people more susceptible to the dangers of contaminated water will also be covered under the Environment Ministry's new requirements.

The regulations, first unveiled in July, comprise the latest step in Operation Clean Water, the government's provincewide effort to improve water quality and delivery in Ontario.

All affected facilities will have to meet the new testing requirements within 60 days.

"Many of our facilities serving children and seniors in Ontario have their own water systems; we need to make sure that water is clean and safe," Environment Minister Elizabeth Witmer said in a release.

Among the requirements of the new rules:

- Regular testing, analysis and a minimum level of treatment of drinking water;
- Immediate notification of health and Environment Ministry authorities by both the water system's owner and the laboratory in the event of an adverse water quality sample;
- Annual reports to consumers and users by the system's owner;
- Lab testing results, annual reports be made public;
- Owners must post warnings if sampling and analysis requirements are not met or if water use should be stopped.

The Ministry of Education has consulted with school boards affected by the regulation and is spending nearly \$13 million to help various schools meet the new rules.

Owners of other private water treatment systems -- such as those at cottages, gas stations, and camps -- will receive information to ensure clean drinking water.

The requirements are similar to those imposed last year on public water works under the Drinking Water Protection Regulation, after an E. coli outbreak in Walkerton, Ont., killed seven and sickened 2,300.

The outbreak and ensuing political scandal prompted the Conservative government to impose a series of sweeping changes to drinking water standards.

It also resulted in a lengthy judicial inquiry into what went wrong in Walkerton; the findings of that inquiry are expected this month.