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# Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards

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# Introduction

- Drinking water standards are one part of a multifaceted approach that ensures the delivery of safe drinking water that is known as the Drinking Water Safety Net
- Other components of the safety net include:
  - Source-to-tap focus
  - Regulatory framework
  - Regular and reliable testing
  - Swift, strong action on adverse water quality incidents
  - Mandatory licensing, operator certification and training
  - Compliance improvement tool kit
  - Partnership and transparency

# Overview of the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards

- Ontario has 158 health-based quality standards for microbiological, chemical and radiological parameters to ensure the highest quality of drinking water
- Ontario's Drinking Water Quality Standards are generally based on the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines
- Health Canada works with well-regarded international agencies such as World Health Organization and United States Environmental Protection Agency to develop the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines
- The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water oversees the process followed by Health Canada; Ontario participates on this committee

# Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines

- The guideline development considers the latest scientific literature to assess the health effects of the parameter
- The evaluation considers health effects such as:
  - Cancer and non-cancer as well as other sources of exposure such as air, soil, food and consumer products;
  - Sensitive life-stage (fetus, infants, children, and adults) affected by the parameter; and
  - Medical conditions that may affect certain individuals in the population.
- The guideline is peer-reviewed by international experts and also undergoes a national consultation to engage stakeholders such as municipalities, public health professionals, industry, and special interest groups
- The guideline value developed by Health Canada could be based on health effects, aesthetic properties such as taste or odour, or, treatment technology limitations

# Adoption of a Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guideline as an Ontario Standard

- Once the guideline is posted by Health Canada, Ontario engages the Advisory Council on Drinking Water Quality and Testing Standards who evaluate the guideline document
- They provide their advice to the Minister of the Environment who then provides direction to the ministry
- The Advisory Council provides advice whether a particular parameter should be adopted as a standard, an operational guideline, or an aesthetic guideline
- Any advice provided by the Advisory Council is posted to their web site in the Annual Report
- The ministry consults with the public on any advice received from the Advisory Council on drinking water standards/guidelines prior to adoption as a provincial standard/guideline
- Analytical methods used to measure a standard/guideline are subject to equally stringent review as the standard/guideline itself

# Ministry Activities Supporting Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards

- In addition to our standards, the ministry is involved in surveillance programs that look for substances that are not our list of standards
- These reports are published from time to time and guide us on developing standards for new substances.
- The ministry also participates in research and demonstration initiatives that look at new treatment technologies to improve drinking water quality