



# Interior Health

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

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[www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006

### **Turbidity campaign provides better health protection for those at-risk**

Thanks to a Turbidity Education & Notification Campaign being developed and delivered by Interior Health (IH) and the larger unfiltered surface water systems in the region, water customers—particularly those most at risk from waterborne disease—will have easier access to information about turbidity.

Turbidity is caused by suspended particles of clay, silt, organic and inorganic matter, plankton, and other microscopic organisms that are picked up by water as it passes through a watershed. Science has proven that as turbidity increases, the risk to human health also increases—particularly for at-risk populations such as newborns, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems. Contaminants such as viruses, bacteria (e.g. *E-Coli*), and parasites (e.g. *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*) can attach themselves to the suspended particles in turbid water. These particles then interfere with disinfection by shielding contaminants from the disinfectant (e.g. chlorine). Nor is chlorine effective in deactivating *Cryptosporidium*.

“We now know that health risks increase as turbidity levels rise,” explains Senior Medical Health Officer Dr. Paul Hasselback. “In response, IH and its larger, surface-water suppliers have expanded their testing, reporting, and notification regimes to provide better protection, particularly for those who are weak or immuno-compromised. We are launching a turbidity campaign to help those at risk make informed decisions about when to boil or seek alternate sources of drinking water.”

To help water suppliers meet their notification requirements, IH is providing them with tool kits containing materials such as news releases, notices, and FAQs. The tool kit also includes the Turbidity Index, a messaging tool designed to notify customers of turbidity levels higher than 1 NTU as recommended in the federal *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*. Using the following scale—**Good** (<1 NTU), **Fair** (1-5 NTU), or **Poor** (>5 NTU), and specific recommendations for each, the index will be accessible on participating water suppliers' websites and through the media.

As noted by Toby Pike, manager of the South East Kelowna Irrigation District and technical chair of the Kelowna Joint Water Committee, “Not only will the turbidity campaign help water suppliers meet the regulatory requirements, it will also help to educate the public and raise awareness of important water resource management issues in Kelowna and throughout Interior Health region. Providing safe, quality water through enhanced treatment and source water protection will be a greater challenge in the future as we face ever increasing demands on our limited water resources. A well-informed public, therefore, is key to making good decisions on water resource management.”

This campaign supports water suppliers’ exemplary efforts at providing their customers with high-quality drinking water. As noted by Dr. Hasselback, “The efforts of many water treatment operators have resulted in improved water quality over the past decade. This campaign is simply a reflection of increased awareness about the link between public health and turbidity.” And as observed by the IH’s Clinical Ethics Committee, “In many areas of health care, there will be new technology and resources that will help us fine tune our delivery of care, and generate a higher standard. This is the evolutionary nature of scientific knowledge.”

The Turbidity Education & Notification Campaign is being rolled out across Interior Health over the next few weeks to ensure water suppliers are well equipped to use and promote it when needed.

For more information, visit our web site at [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

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