How to read your Drinking Water Report

1. The **Analyte** column shows all the things we tested in your water.
2. The **Units** column has the unit of measurement for each analyte. mg/L (milligrams per Liter) is the same as ppm (parts per million).
3. The **Result** column shows the amount of each analyte we measured in your water. The symbol "<" means less than and the symbol ">" means greater than.
4. The **Guideline Limit** column refers to the current *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* limits for each analyte measured. There are 3 kinds of limits:
   a) **Maximum Acceptable Concentration (MAC)** - These guidelines are health related and is based on the risk of toxicity to yourself and your animals (some examples are **E. coli** and **arsenic**). All the analytes tested that fall under these guidelines, must be below the MAC limit for the water to be considered Potable (safe for drinking).
   b) **Aesthetic Objective (AO)** – Analytes that are above these guideline limits can affect the look, taste or smell of your drinking water. They can also stain plumbing fixtures, dishes and laundry. If the concentration is well above the Aesthetic Objective, there is also a possibility it can affect your health. Please contact your local health officer if you have questions. The water may still be designated potable, even if several analytes are above aesthetic. However, you may want to consider a treatment system to reduce these levels.
   c) **Operational Guideline (OG)** – this guideline applies specifically to waterworks systems (like municipal water). Although these guidelines are not strictly related to well water, it is a good idea to reduce these levels if they are high because they may be caused by poor well maintenance, surface water getting into your well or screening problems with your well water.
5. The **Guideline Comments** column shows whether your results meet the Guideline Limits.

Below MAC	- tells you your result was below the Maximum Acceptable Concentration, and is safe.
Above MAC	- tells you the result was above the Maximum Acceptable Concentration and is a health concern.
Below AO	- tells you your result was below the Aesthetic Objective limit.
Above AO	- tells you your result was above the AO limit, and can be treated if it is a problem.
Below OG	- tells you your result was below the Operational Guideline.
Above OG	- tells you the aluminum or turbidity is above the OG.

All drinking water supplies should be tested regularly for bacteria, particularly shallow wells. To find out if your water contains disease-causing bacteria, we perform 3 bacteria tests:

1. **Total Coliform** bacteria are made up of 2 groups. One group is found naturally in soil from dead or decaying vegetation (leaves, moss, algae). If we find total coliforms in your well water, it indicates surface water is getting into the well or algae is growing in your lines.
2. If we find **Escherichia coli** (**E. coli**), which makes up 95% of the fecal coliform group, it indicates recent contamination of the water by human or animal sewage or dead animals, which could contain disease-causing bacteria, viruses or protozoa. Water containing E. coli is **NOT** safe to drink and must be boiled.
3. **Heterotrophic Plate Count (HPC**) - estimates the general background bacteria population. These bacteria will not hurt your health, but are an indication that bacteria are growing in your well. A high HPC count can cause a bad smell in your water (like sulfur or rotting eggs), and can form a biofilm that can clog your pump and lines. A high count (greater than 500) may also hide the presence of coliform bacteria.

If any bacteria show **Above MAC**, play it safe and **boil your water before drinking.** Disinfecting your well and water distribution system will usually correct bacterial growth. We can provide information on how to disinfect your well yourself, or you can have a professional from a water treatment company or a well drilling company (check your yellow pages) perform the disinfection for you.

After your system has been cleaned or treated, bring us another sample and your previous **Lot Number** for a Repeat Bacteria Test. We can also retest for individual substances like arsenic.

** Please contact your local Health Officer for further information, or if you have a number of substances that are "above AO". For more information on water contaminants and filtration systems, please visit: www.nsf.org.