



June 6, 2022

Dear School Boards of Education, Independent Schools, and First Nation Schools,

Re: Radon Testing in Schools

As the Interior Health Medical Health Officers under the *Public Health Act*, and School Medical Officers under the *School Act*, we would like to raise awareness about radon gas within the indoor environment at schools. Radon levels have been found to be higher in the Interior Health Region, please refer to the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) interactive [map](#).

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas formed from the decay of uranium. It can travel up through the soil and enter buildings through cracks and small openings in the building foundation. Health Canada indicates that long-term exposure to radon is the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers. Annually, there are more than 3,000 radon-related deaths in Canada. This short [video](#) from the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health provides a great overview of radon in the indoor environment.

Exposure is particularly concerning for young children with developing lungs and a high breathing rate. Some schools have undergone radon screening or more comprehensive testing, with many already receiving action to mitigate and lower the indoor exposure levels. **The only way to determine indoor levels of radon is to test.** Testing for radon is easy, and should be part of routine building maintenance along with increasingly important heating, ventilation, air conditioning system (HVAC) oversight.

The BCCDC has recently developed the [Radon Measurement and Mitigation in Schools](#) Guideline for testing in the school setting. Interior Health Medical Health Officers ask school management to test for radon, and to ensure that levels are as far below the Canadian Guideline of 200 Bq/m³ as reasonably possible.

Any indoor environment can have high radon, with basements in particular greatly exceeding the Canadian Guideline. The above BCCDC Guideline encourages schools to be community leaders in raising radon awareness among staff, parents, and students by promoting action that includes testing their homes.

We recognize and acknowledge that we are collectively gathered on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the seven Interior Region First Nations. This region is also home to 15 Chartered Métis Communities. It is with humility that we continue to strengthen our relationships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples across the Interior.

For schools in First Nations communities, First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) can support by undertaking radon testing in the school at no cost to the First Nation. For further information on radon supports available in First Nations, please contact Interior.Region@fnha.ca.

For questions and to submit your test results, please email the Healthy Built Environment team at HBE@interiorhealth.ca.

Further radon information can be found on our website at [Radon Gas | Environmental & Seasonal Health | IH \(interiorhealth.ca\)](#).

Sincerely,



Dr. Sue Pollock
Interim Chief Medical Health Officer



Dr. Carol Fenton
Medical Health Officer



Dr. Karin Goodison
Medical Health Officer



Dr. Jonathan Malo
Medical Health Officer



Dr. Shobhit Maruti
Medical Health Officer



Dr. Silvina Mema
Medical Health Officer



Dr. Fatemeh Sabet
Medical Health Officer

Copy: Federation of Independent Schools
First Nations Health Authority

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