



## **Radon Testing in Schools Project- Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is Radon?**

Radon is an odourless and colourless gas. The gas is released when uranium – naturally present in rock and soil – decays.

### **Why is it a concern?**

When radon gas is inhaled, it releases radioactive particles which cause damage to DNA in lung cells. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and responsible for approximately 16 per cent of lung cancer deaths in Canada. In smokers, exposure to radon increases the risk of lung cancer from one in 20 people to one in three.

### **How do you get exposed to radon?**

Radon is found in all buildings and is drawn inside because of the pressure difference between the ground and indoors. The gas can enter through unfinished floors, wall slab joints, sump pumps, windows, and cracks and openings in foundations.

### **Why are we testing our schools?**

At this point, we have no reason to believe that radon is an issue in Elk Island Public Schools. While testing is not mandatory in Alberta, the only way to know if radon is a problem in a building is to test for it. Health Canada recommends that all buildings, including homes and schools, be tested and fixed if necessary to ensure they have less than the allowable limit of 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> of radon gas.

Since children and our staff spend a considerable part of their lives inside school buildings. It is important to be proactive and take steps to reduce the overall lifetime exposure to radon gas.

### **How and when will the testing be done?**

Schools will be randomly selected for testing over the next 3-5 years until baseline testing in all EIPS schools and buildings is completed. Testing will begin in November 2017.

### **How is radon tested and where can I get more information?**

All rooms in contact with the ground and occupied for more than four hours per day will be tested. Test devices that resemble a small black disc will be hung from the ceiling in each room. The devices will remain for at least four months over the heating season when buildings are more air tight.

For more information contact Lisa Johnston (780 417-8193), Steve Reid (780 417-8171) or visit

CAREX Canada: [http://www.carexcanada.ca/en/announcements/radon\\_in\\_schools/](http://www.carexcanada.ca/en/announcements/radon_in_schools/)

Health Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/radiation/radon.html>

November 6, 2017

