

Radon in Your Child's School

A guide for parents and parent councils · Revised August 2026 · RadonTest.ca

Current version, and the citable source for this document: radontest.ca/blogs/articles/parent-guide-radon-in-schools-canada

For parents and parent councils. Children spend around 1,200 hours a year in a school building. This sets out how to ask whether it has been tested for radon, who is responsible, what a proper test looks like, and what the numbers mean. Two things worth saying first: **most buildings test below the guideline**, and **a school that has not tested is not unusual or negligent** — almost no Canadian jurisdiction requires it. **Free to reproduce.**

What actually applies to schools

No Canadian province or territory requires radon testing in schools. There is no general federal requirement either, except for schools operated by a First Nations band council, which are federally regulated as workplaces.

What does apply:

- **Health Canada's guideline of 200 Bq/m³** applies to all indoor spaces including schools. It is a guideline rather than a regulation, and Health Canada publishes a measurement protocol for public buildings including schools.
- **Occupational health and safety law** reaches the same building through a different door. Teachers and staff are workers, school boards are employers, and every jurisdiction imposes a general duty regarding recognised hazards. The building does not get tested for students and not for staff — it is one measurement.
- **One regional exception:** in British Columbia, Interior Health ordered radon testing in licensed childcare facilities within its region, using a medical health officer's authority. Regional, and childcare rather than schools generally.
- **Alberta** passed a *Radon Awareness and Testing Act* in 2017 covering childcare facilities. It was **never proclaimed into force** and lapsed in 2023. There is no Alberta requirement.

So the honest framing when you ask: nobody is obliged to do this, and it is reasonable to ask anyway.

Who to ask

Start with the **principal**, who will usually redirect you, and follow up with the **board's facilities or operations department** — they hold building records and make testing decisions. Individual schools rarely control this.

Other routes, depending on how your board is organised: the **school council or parent advisory council**, which can ask on behalf of many families; the **joint health and safety committee**, via a teacher or staff member, who have standing to raise a workplace hazard formally; and **trustees**, if you want a board-wide answer. A question from a parent council carries more weight than an individual email.

A letter you can adapt

Dear [name],

I am a parent at [school]. I would like to ask whether the school building has been tested for radon.

If it has: when was it tested, what were the results, and are the records available?

If it has not: is there a plan to test during the coming heating season? I understand testing needs to run for at least three months between roughly October and April, so I appreciate the timing matters.

I am asking because Health Canada identifies radon as the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada and its guideline applies to all indoor spaces including schools. I understand there is no legal requirement to

test, and I am not suggesting anything is wrong — I would simply like to know whether the measurement has been done.

Thank you, [you]

Two things that letter does deliberately. It **acknowledges there is no requirement**, which removes the easiest way to deflect the question. And it **says explicitly that you are not alleging a problem** — you will get a better answer from someone who does not feel accused.

How to read the answer

If you are told...	What to ask next
"Tested, below the guideline."	When, how many detectors, which rooms, and is the report available. A good answer withstands this easily.
"We did a test."	How many detectors? One in each occupied room in contact with the ground, one per 200 m ² in larger spaces such as a gym or library, plus quality control. One reading for a whole school is not a compliant measurement.
"Tested in spring / with a monitor."	Long-term measurement of at least three months during the heating season is the method for deciding whether to act.
"Tested some years ago."	Ask about renovations, ventilation work, energy retrofits, or changes in how ground-floor rooms are used.
"There is no requirement."	Accurate. The follow-up is whether they would consider it anyway, and what it would take.
"We will look into it."	Ask for a date. Without one the seasonal window tends to close on its own.

What the numbers mean

Result	Health Canada guidance
Below 200 Bq/m ³	No action recommended. Retest after renovations, ventilation changes or an energy retrofit.
200–600 Bq/m ³	Reduce within two years
Above 600 Bq/m ³	Reduce within one year

No level is risk-free, and risk accumulates with concentration multiplied by time. But context matters: these are timelines measured in years, not emergencies. A result above the guideline means the building should be fixed on a schedule, not evacuated. Mitigation in a school is the same technique used in houses at a larger scale, and typically reduces levels by more than 80%.

If the result is above the guideline

What you want to see is a plan with dates, not a promise. Ask for these five things in writing:

- **Which rooms** were above, and what interim steps are being taken in those rooms.
- **Who is doing the mitigation** — a certified professional, ideally one listed under the Canadian National Radon Proficiency Program.
- **When**, against Health Canada's timelines.
- **How it will be verified afterwards**. Health Canada recommends the follow-up test not be carried out by the company that installed the system.
- **How results will be communicated** to families.

A board handling this properly will have most of the answers already.

And your own home

Worth saying plainly: a child spends far more hours at home than at school. If the school question has prompted you to think about radon, **testing your own house is the higher-value action** — and it is entirely within your control. A long-term kit is inexpensive, needs no installation, and the detector goes in the lowest lived-in level for at least three months during the heating season.

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We do not interpret health risk — Health Canada is the health authority on radon in Canada (canada.ca/radon). This document describes publicly available guidance and **is not legal or health advice**.

Sources. Health Canada, Guide for Radon Measurements in Public Buildings; Canadian radon guideline; Radon — Reduction Guide for Canadians. *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*, S.B.C. 2002, c. 75. *Radon Awareness and Testing Act*, SA 2017, c. R-2.5 (never proclaimed). IARC Monograph Vol. 100D. C-NRPP.