

Canadian homeowners need to know about the cancer risk in their basements

Can you name the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in Canada?

(Toronto, ON April 17, 2012) A new study, *The Radon Challenge: Building Awareness and Encouraging Action* by The Homeowner Protection Centre (HPC) suggests that only about 8% of Canadians can name radon as the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in Canada, despite Health Canada efforts to raise awareness.

Found in every Canadian province and territory, radon is a colourless, odourless, radioactive gas that can seep from surrounding soil into houses (in fact, into all types of buildings including schools and hospitals). Health Canada suggests that it accounts for approximately 10% of all lung cancers across the country, second only to tobacco smoke.

Few Canadians have tested their homes for the carcinogen and fewer still have taken the relatively inexpensive steps to radon-proof their homes. These were the conclusions of the recently completed *The Radon Challenge* study, undertaken by the HPC, a not-for-profit committed to improving housing and housing-related services across Canada.

“Homeowners have the ability to protect their families from radon with affordable solutions, but they can’t take action if they’re not aware,” stated Michael Lio, Executive Director of the Homeowner Protection Centre.

Mr. Lio continued, “Radon gas test kits are commonly available at Canadian hardware stores and in most cases cost less than \$50. Testing your home is the first step in protecting your family’s health.”

Province-wide testing of buildings began in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in 2009. In 2010, Quebec began radon testing in its schools. Currently, Ontario has no policy in place but a Private Member’s Bill (Radon Awareness and Protection Act – 2012 Bill 36), first introduced in 2011 and again on February 23, 2012 by MPP Reza Moridi, is an attempt to address this.

In 2007, Health Canada lowered the recommended guideline for indoor radon levels by 75% to 200 Bq/m³. Five years later, Canadians are still largely unaware of this harmful gas. Michael Lio reports that, “Five years after Health Canada lowered the radon standard, there is still no national forum to coordinate efforts across provinces and territories. We need a national strategy. Health Canada must take the lead by bringing all stakeholders together to coordinate activities.”

The low level of awareness among Canadians suggests that the current approaches are not working. What is clear from the Homeowner Protection Centre's study is that the time to act is now. Waiting to act is harming Canadians. Radon induced lung cancers continue to take lives. The time for decisive and coordinated nation-wide action is now.

For more information, visit: <http://www.homeownerprotection.ca>

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*The **Homeowner Protection Centre** was established to advocate for homeowners and their important issues. It is a network of homeowners, builders, renovators, and home product and service suppliers who are committed to improving housing and housing-related services across Canada. The HPC is not-for-profit, and is supported through memberships and donations by homeowners and companies. Michael Lio, founder of the Homeowner Protection Centre, has represented consumers for almost 25 years on numerous boards, councils and committees.*