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The Hon. Mark Holland
Minister of Health

July 2, 2024

Re. Radon-induced lung cancer in Butternut Valley Municipality, New Brunswick

Dear Minister Holland,

I am writing to raise attention to the disproportionate rates of lung cancer caused by radon gas poisoning in and around Butternut Valley, New Brunswick. As this is a regional health crisis and emergency situation, I ask that Health Canada direct funding toward home repairs and infrastructure in the greater Butternut Valley Municipality that is equipped to test for, research and treat radon gas poisoning. I have copied Alan Brown, the mayor of Butternut Valley, so he is aware of our communications on this matter.

Health Canada found in 2012 that New Brunswick had the second highest rates of elevated (>200 Bq/m³) radon in the country (>18%). One in five homes in New Brunswick have levels of radon that warrant mitigating repairs. As well, the risk of exposure to elevated radon levels is cumulative over time and New Brunswick has an aging population. This puts an increasing number of people at risk in the upcoming years. Despite this, New Brunswick remains to date the only province without financial support for radon mitigation in households.

A November 2023 study by NB Lung found that in Butternut Valley, >60% of homes tested exceed 200 Bq/m³ and require mitigation within two years and >40% of homes exceed 600 Bq/m³ and require mitigation within one year according to Health Canada's recommendations. Bordering and outlying areas around the municipality similarly show concerning results with 45% of homes affected by elevated radon levels. Angela Stief Lea, a well-known physiotherapist in Butternut Valley, passed away from stage-four lung cancer last fall, with the November 2023 study finding extremely elevated levels of radon in her home.



Lung cancer treatment is a significant expense, costing approximately \$70,000 a year. In contrast, home repairs to remove radon cost an average of \$2000-\$3000. From a cost-savings perspective, taking proactive steps to mitigate radon is a smart decision for Health Canada. While New Brunswick has taken some steps to financially support radon testing and mitigation in social housing developments, the federal government needs to intervene from a healthcare lens.

I ask that Health Canada implement a program in partnership with New Brunswick and local governments to test for and research radon and finance home repairs for New Brunswickers whose homes are found to have elevated levels of radon. This program should also be available in any areas across Canada that have evidence of high levels of radon gas in homes. This will reduce the burden on primary care and protect people from avoidable lung cancer.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,



Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament
Saanich-Gulf Islands
Leader of the Green Party of Canada

CC. Alan Brown, Mayor of Butternut Valley Municipality
Mike Morrice, MP for Kitchener Centre

