February 28, 2019

The Honourable Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Dear Minister:

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer behind smoking and is the main cause of lung cancer among those who have never smoked. It is linked to approximately 16% of all lung cancer deaths in Canada.

Radon is a colourless, odourless gas produced by the decay of natural uranium in rocks and soils throughout the earth’s crust. As radon breaks down, it forms radioactive particles that can get lodged into lung tissue as you breathe. The radon particles then release energy that can damage lung cells. When these cells are damaged, they have the potential to result in cancer. Outdoors, radon is quickly diluted by atmospheric mixing and is of no further concern, but in confined spaces, such as residential homes, radon can accumulate to harmful levels putting individuals and families at risk.

At its meeting on February 27, 2019, the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A) Board of Health passed the following motion:

‘THAT the KFL&A Board of Health urge the provincial government to adopt the proposed radon protection measures into the Ontario Building Code.’

The National Building Code (NBC) of Canada addresses the design and construction of new buildings and substantial renovations to existing buildings. The NBC requires radon protection in all new home construction including designs to minimize the level of radon entering a home though the foundation and a rough-in for a future radon reduction system. However, the NBC is a model code and only becomes legally binding when it is incorporated into provincial or territorial law. Most provinces have at least partially adopted the NBC, but Ontario is one of only four provinces who has not. The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs has proposed amendments to incorporate radon protection into the Ontario Building Code in 2019.

Including radon prevention provisions as part of a mandatory provincial building code has the potential to be an effective radon prevention initiative over the long term as new homes are built or major renovations occur. If radon protection measures were incorporated into the Ontario Building Code this year, in 37 years, approximately 50% of the homes in Ontario would be built to that standard.

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Addressing the changes to the Ontario Building Code would further protect the health of Ontarians and reduce the incidence of radon-related lung cancer. The KFL&A Board of Health urges the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to adopt the proposed changes to the Ontario Building Code as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Denis Doyle
Chair, KFL&A Board of Health

cc: Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
    Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
    Ian Arthur, MPP Kingston and the Islands
    Randy Hillier, MPP Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston
    Daryl Kramp, MPP Hastings-Lennox and Addington
    Monica Turner, Director of Policy, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
    Loretta Ryan, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
    Ontario Boards of Health
    OPHA Environmental Working Group