OTTAWA HOUSE INSPECTION

Radon When Buying

Health Canada's radon guideline and 91-day test, and what that means for a home purchase in Ottawa

4 Expert Answers from Inspection IQ

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Q1

Is a short-term radon test useful when buying in Orleans?

Health Canada is clear on this: short-term measurements are not appropriate for informing mitigation decisions, and the minimum test length for a valid estimate is 91 days, with those days falling during the heating season. So a short-term test cannot give you a reliable answer for a purchase decision.

That 91-day minimum matters a great deal in a purchase. A test started during a condition period will not finish inside it unless the condition runs longer than three months. Health Canada also notes that results can vary by up to plus or minus 25% even with a proper long-term test, which is another reason a quick reading cannot serve as a pass or fail for a purchase decision.

What you can do instead is place a long-term test device, from the C-NRPP list, in a normal occupancy area of the lowest lived-in level of the home, a space someone spends more than 4 hours a day in, and let it run for at least 91 days after you take possession. Ottawa Public Health notes that radon levels vary a great deal across Canada and within the City of Ottawa, making it difficult to predict radon levels in any one home. Do-it-yourself long-term kits cost roughly $29 to $170. Health Canada recommends every home be tested, and says to take corrective action within one year if the average annual level exceeds 200 Bq/m^3.

Radon testing is a separate matter from a home inspection. If you want a professionally conducted long-term test, ottawaabatement.com lists that service.

Whether radon belongs in your offer at all is a question for your agent or lawyer.

Q2

Can I test for radon during a conditional offer in Ottawa?

Not for a valid result. Health Canada says the minimum test length is 91 days for a valid estimate, with at least 91 days of the test during the heating season, and that short-term measurements are not appropriate for informing mitigation decisions. A test started during a condition period will not finish inside it unless the condition runs longer than three months.

So a short reading cannot serve as a pass or fail for the purchase. Health Canada's guideline is an annual average: take corrective action if the average annual radon level exceeds 200 Bq/m^3 in the normal occupancy area.

What you can plan for instead:

- Health Canada recommends every home be tested, so a long-term test once you live in the house is the route to a valid number.
- Use a device on the C-NRPP list, in a normal occupancy area of the lowest lived-in level. Ottawa Public Health puts do-it-yourself long-term kits at $29 to $170.
- If the result is above 200 Bq/m³, Health Canada says individuals mitigate within 1 year, and points to a C-NRPP certified radon mitigation professional for the work.

Ottawa Public Health says radon concentrations vary a great deal within the City of Ottawa, making it difficult to predict radon levels in any one home, so a neighbour's result does not stand in for yours.
Whether radon belongs in your offer at all, and how, is a question for your agent or lawyer. Radon testing and mitigation as services are covered on ottawaabatement.com.

Ask your agent how the 91-day minimum fits your timeline before you write radon into an offer.

Q3

Health Canada on testing a brand-new Riverside South home for radon?

Health Canada recommends that every home be tested, no matter where it is located, the type of building, or whether it already has a mitigation system, so a brand-new home in Riverside South is included.

Its testing guide applies to a new home the same way:

- The minimum test length is 91 days for a valid estimate, with at least 91 days of the test during the heating season.
- Test in a normal occupancy area of the lowest lived-in level, a space someone spends more than 4 hours a day in.
- Use a device that appears on the C-NRPP list, and do not alter how you live in the house during the test.
- Short-term measurements are not appropriate for informing mitigation decisions.

Health Canada's guideline is to take corrective action if the average annual radon level exceeds 200 Bq/m³ in the normal occupancy area. It says 200 Bq/m³ is not a recommended stopping point if it is reasonable to go lower, and that individuals mitigate within 1 year for levels higher than 200 Bq/m³. For corrective work it points to a C-NRPP certified radon mitigation professional.
Ottawa Public Health says radon concentrations vary a great deal within the City of Ottawa, making it difficult to predict radon levels in any one home, and it puts do-it-yourself long-term kits at $29 to $170. Radon testing and mitigation as services are covered on ottawaabatement.com.

What Tarion's warranty says about radon is a question to put to Tarion directly.

Because a valid test needs at least 91 days, start it once you are living in the home, in the lowest lived-in level, during the heating season.

Q4

Where should a radon detector go in a Nepean house?

Health Canada says all measurements should be made in a normal occupancy area of the lowest lived-in level of the home. A normal occupancy area is any space in which a person spends more than 4 hours per day. In a Nepean house, that means the lowest level where someone actually spends that time.

Health Canada's testing guide sets out the rest:

- The minimum test length is 91 days for a valid estimate, with at least 91 days of the test during the heating season.
- Health Canada strongly recommends testing only with devices that appear on the C-NRPP list.
- Residents should not alter their lifestyle during a long-term radon test.
- Short-term measurements are not appropriate for informing mitigation decisions.
- Results can vary by up to plus or minus 25%.

Ottawa Public Health says radon concentrations vary a great deal within the City of Ottawa, making it difficult to predict radon levels in any one home, and Health Canada recommends every home be tested. Ottawa Public Health puts do-it-yourself long-term kits at $29 to $170.
Health Canada's guideline is to take corrective action if the average annual radon level exceeds 200 Bq/m³ in the normal occupancy area, and it says individuals mitigate within 1 year for levels higher than 200 Bq/m³. For corrective work it points to a C-NRPP certified radon mitigation professional. Radon testing and mitigation as services are covered on ottawaabatement.com.

If you are asking because you are buying, keep the timing in mind: a valid result takes at least 91 days, so a test started during a condition period will not finish inside it unless the condition runs longer than three months.

If you want an inspector to set up the test, ask whether they offer long-term radon testing and which device from the C-NRPP list they use.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa House Inspection. It does not constitute professional or legal advice. A home inspection is a visual inspection with limits: it is not a pass or fail test, does not assess zoning or building codes and comes with no warranty (ontario.ca). Ask your agent or lawyer about offers and conditions, and Tarion about new-home warranties. Information is current as of November 8, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawahouseinspection.ca** for the latest answers.