

Winnipeg examines arena pollution problem

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[CBC News](#)

A Winnipeg city councillor is asking that an arena in his ward be retested, and the building be fixed or closed, if necessary, in the wake of a CBC investigation that suggested the facility had high levels of air pollution.

Mynarski Coun. Harry Lazarenko said he was surprised when he heard West Kildonan Arena had the highest level of ultrafine particle pollution among the 42 arenas in five Canadian cities tested by the CBC.

There are no health standards for this type of pollution, but studies have shown that exposure to high levels of ultrafine particulate matter is linked to a decrease in lung function.

'If I had children, I wouldn't let them go in there until this was clear.'

—Coun. Harry Lazarenko

Almost a quarter of the arenas' test results showed more than 60,000 particles of pollution per cubic centimetre, a level that an expert consulted by CBC said is cause for concern.

At the West Kildonan Arena, in Lazarenko's ward, the maximum count during CBC's spot check was 250,000 particles — the highest of any arena tested and more than double the amount that could be expected near a busy freeway.

Notre Dame arena's maximum test levels were also over 60,000 particles, while Pioneer arena's maximum was 58,000. Seven other arenas in Winnipeg were also among those spot-checked in the CBC investigation.

No cost too high

Lazarenko wants the arena retested and fixed, if necessary.

"We have to address this now, not to wait, because it's a health issue that could have a long-term effect on the persons that are using it," Lazarenko said. "I would say either correct it or shut it down."

The air pollution is believed to come from ice resurfacing machines used in arenas. Converting those machines to electricity — from propane, in West Kildonan's case — and improving ventilation could make a difference, but fixing the problem could be an expensive proposition.

"I don't care what the cost is. It's to provide a safe and healthy environment. Whatever we can put into place to correct it, we shall do," Lazarenko said.

Consult health experts

"The question is: Will the parents or users, the stakeholders, use that West Kildonan Arena? I tell you right now that if I had children, I wouldn't let them go in there until this was clear," he added.

City of Winnipeg spokesman Ken Allen said the city is taking the results of the CBC investigation very seriously. Allen said the city already monitors air quality in its arenas, but this type of ultrafine particulate pollution is a new area of research.

"Safety and health of staff and the public in city facilities is a priority for us," he said.

"What we're going to do is consult with health experts, and we're going to be talking to them about this new and evolving area, and we're going to be looking to them for direction in terms of how best to address this situation."

City officials would not commit to any plan of action for the city's arenas.