

## Mould made two kids sick: Parents

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By Bob Mitchell  
Group

Group suspects mould

after pupils become ill

PEEL/HALTON BUREAU CHIEF

A Mississauga parents' group is issuing a warning on mould after two children whose classes are in portables sought medical treatment for breathing problems.

Members of Parents of Peel say the children's respiratory problems may be linked to the presence of stachybotrys atra mould - a potentially toxic spore.

Several medical experts have linked prolonged exposure to the mould, one type of fungus found in portables, to migraines, nosebleeds, flu-like symptoms, asthma, fatigue, rashes and diarrhea.

Teacher strike looms, B4

But Peel's acting medical officer of health says the group shouldn't jump to conclusions, insisting there's no proof the children became sick because of mould.

''You can't draw any conclusions from the fact these children were treated for respiratory problems and they also happened to be in portables,''

'' said Dr. Barbara Kawa.

''They could have had an allergic reaction to a variety of things, from outside mouldy leaves to pollen, dust, animal dander and tobacco smoke. There are probably a lot of other children who were treated for respiratory problems who weren't in portables.''

Mould can't be ruled out as the cause of the children's breathing problems until their portables are tested, Parents of Peel spokesperson Gordon Flett said.

The group is to hold a public forum tonight at 7 at the Mississauga Civic Centre.

One of the children who experienced breathing problems, a Grade 5 student at Middlebury Public School, spent a week in hospital, group members say.

That student and the other youngster, a Grade 3 student at Thomas Public School, both attend class in portables that haven't been tested by the Peel District School Board, Flett said.

''They (the two students) exhibited severe breathing problems that are entirely consistent with exposure to toxic mould,''

Flett said.

''We have had numerous reports of other children in portables exhibiting respiratory problems, chronic headaches and, in some instances, spontaneous nosebleeds.''

The public board has spent more than \$7 million on testing for mould, which has so far been found in 231 portables. At least another 100

portables, where mould is believed to exist, are scheduled to have walls and ceilings torn out so tests can be conducted.

At least 134 of those tested are being demolished and 91 will be repaired. Another 55 new portables have been ordered

``Hundreds of portables throughout Peel haven't been tested with invasive procedures,'' Flett said.

Meanwhile, Peel's Catholic board is expected to spend an additional \$5.2 million on rehabilitating 190 portables and to conduct invasive testing on those that may have mould.

Another 122 of 126 portables where mould was found have been rebuilt at a cost of about \$1.2 million.

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