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Toxic Use Reduction Poll Results Key Messages

The Society's Position:

- The Society is very concerned about toxic substances in our air, water, land and consumer products. The Society strongly believes that as community members, workers and consumers, we all have the right to know about the environmental and occupational risks we are exposed to; allowing us to make informed decisions affecting our health. In particular, we believe people have the right to know if they are being exposed to cancer-causing substances.

Key Messages:

The public overwhelming supports the Government of Ontario's commitment to implement a toxics reduction strategy, even in light of the current economic situation.

- 96% support a government plan to have industries develop a toxics reduction plan.
 - When asked if the current economic situation caused them to rethink their support, 67% said no.

Ontarians are concerned about the presence of toxic chemicals in their environments and the impact they have on their health and the health of their families.

- The majority (76%) of Ontarians surveyed believe toxic chemicals are present where they live, work and play and 77% believe they are present in the products they use every day.
- Over 80% of those who believe toxics exist in their environments are concerned that those toxics affect their health and the health of their families.

The Society looks forward to the introduction of strong toxic use reduction legislation in the beginning of the next legislative session and hopes to see a requirement for an easy-to-read label or symbol on products containing a cancer causing substance.

- Virtually all Ontarians (99%) felt that they have the right to be informed, either by a symbol or label, about harmful chemicals in a product before they buy it.

The Canadian Cancer Society is pleased that informing the public about toxic chemicals is one of the three pillars of the proposed strategy as there is a high level of interests among Ontarians to learn more about toxic chemicals in their environments and products.

- 59% agree that they would like to learn more about the presence of toxic chemicals in areas where they live, work and place and products they use.
- 96% of Ontarians also felt that they have the right to be informed about toxic chemicals they are exposed to in their workplace.

The Society would like to see requirements around substitution where safer alternatives exist, a third party institute to provide training and technical assistance to industry and measurable targets for reduction included in the legislation.

- Nearly nine in 10 Ontarians (87%) feel it is 'very important' to substitute toxic chemicals with less harmful chemicals whenever possible.

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***Take charge on toxics* is a campaign supported of a broad coalition of respected health, environmental and labour organizations aimed at ensuring Ontario's Toxic Use Reduction legislation reduces Ontarians risk of developing cancer by effectively addressing toxic chemicals where people live, work and play.**

The campaign members are:

- Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division
- Canadian Environmental Law Association
- Ontario Public Health Association
- United Steelworkers
- Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition
- Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
- Ontario College of Family Physicians
- Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

The campaign calls for legislation address 5 Rs: Reduce, Replace, Restrict, Report and Reveal.

- **Reduce** the release of toxic chemicals in places where people live, work and play by 50% within five years in Ontario to protect public health.
- **Replace** toxic chemicals where safer alternatives exist.
- **Restrict** the use of toxic chemicals that are still in use through guidance from an Ontario Toxic Use Reduction Institute (OTURI).
- **Report** annually on progress and monitor emissions, holding industry accountable to reduce their use of toxic substances through enforcement of regulations.
- **Reveal** to all Ontarians the toxic chemicals in their workplaces, community and homes through an identifiable product label or symbol and access to a public database.

The public can do their part to take charge on toxics right now by visiting our campaign website at www.takechargeontoxics.ca and sending a letter to their MPP.

Potential Questions:

Q: Does the Government's Toxics Reduction Strategy affect our "local toxic issue"?

A: The health of all Ontarians will benefit from reduced toxic chemicals in the environments where they live, work and play. The focus of the government's strategy is on the mining and manufacturing industry.

- Refer them to the Government's Toxics Reduction Strategy Document for more details about the Strategy which can be found on the Ministry of the Environment's website.

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Q: We are facing a global economic crisis – shouldn't the government be focusing on the economy right now?

A: We can't lose sight of the fact that cancer is a growing concern in Ontario. The Society believes cancer prevention should be a priority of the government and the public agrees. 80% of Ontarians surveyed feel that the issue of toxic chemicals should be a high or somewhat high priority for the Ontario Government and 96% support a government plan to reduce toxics in Ontario. The poll results indicated that 67% of Ontarians would not rethink their support for reducing toxics even in the current economic situation.

Taking action now to prevent cancer means saving health care costs in the long-term.

Q: What's the message you want to get out to government today?

A: There is overwhelming public support (96%) for the government to reduce toxic chemicals in areas where we live, work and play. There is a strong demand for community right to know to play a significant role in the legislation as 99% of Ontarians feel they have the right to be informed, either by a symbol or label, about harmful chemicals in a product before they buy it. The government should ensure the 5R's – Reduce, Replace, Restrict, Report and Reveal are reflected in the legislation.

Q: What is community right to know?

A: The principle of community right to know is that we are all, as individuals, entitled to information about cancer-causing substances in our environments so we can make informed decisions about our health. Product labelling is a key component of CRTK and 99% of Ontarians feel they have the right to be informed, either by a symbol or label, about harmful chemicals in a product before they buy it.

For questions around types of chemicals please use the following answer:

Refer them to the Government's Toxics Reduction Strategy Document for more details about the chemicals included in the strategy which can be found on the Ministry of the Environment's website.

For questions about the link between cancer and the environment please use the following answer:

Cancer is a complex issue. Any plan to reduce cancer-causing substances in our environments will ultimately play a role in cancer prevention. The poll results indicate that Ontarians are concerned about the presence of toxic chemicals in their environments and the impact they have on their health and the health of their families.

Q: How much did the study cost?

A: Research and working to prevent cancer is a large and important part of what the Society does. The results of our poll clearly show that legislations is needed to protect the health of Ontarians and there is a demand for strong toxics reduction legislation in this province.

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Q: How much will this strategy implementation cost?

A: It is the government's responsibility to determine how much money should be allocated to their toxics reduction strategy. An investment that reduces cancer risk will save lives and reduce health care costs in the long-term.

Q: Have other jurisdictions implemented toxics reduction legislation?

A: Yes, other jurisdictions have been successful in implementing toxics reduction legislation and have seen many benefits from the legislation. However, the issue today is the overwhelming support for toxics reduction legislation to be implemented in Ontario so Ontarian's health can benefit from reduced toxic chemicals in areas where they live, work and play.