

Attention: News/Environmental/Health Editors

**Canadian Cancer Society poll results show government action to reduce toxic chemicals a priority for Ontarians**  
***Take Charge on Toxics campaign and website launched***

TORONTO, Dec 4 — Poll results released today by the Canadian Cancer Society show that Ontarians want action taken to reduce toxic chemicals in their environment even in light of current economic conditions.

“Our poll shows 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,” says Rowena Pinto, Director, Public Affairs, Ontario Division, Canadian Cancer Society.

“The public is behind the Ontario government’s commitment to implement a toxics reduction strategy,” says Pinto. “And the poll showed this support despite an uncertain economic situation.”

The Society looks forward to the introduction of Ontario’s Toxics Reduction Strategy legislation in the beginning of the next legislative session.

“We’re 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 interest among Ontarians to learn more about toxic chemicals in their environments and products,” says Pinto.

“However we hope to see product labeling included in the legislation as well, and consumers agree. Virtually all — 99% — of Ontarians strongly agree that there should be an easy-to-read label or symbol indicating the presence of toxic chemicals in a product.”

The Society would also 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.

A coalition of health, environment and labour organizations has launched a campaign called Take Charge on Toxics to help ensure Ontario’s Toxic Reduction Strategy legislation will reduce Ontarians’ risk of developing cancer by effectively addressing toxic chemicals where people live, work and play.

The campaign calls for legislation that will address the following 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 Society encourages members of the public to take charge on toxics by visiting [www.takechargeontoxics.ca](http://www.takechargeontoxics.ca) (available Dec. 8) and sending a letter to their MPP.

## QUOTES

"This survey reinforces what we hear every day," said Sarah Miller, Researcher for the Canadian Environmental Law Association. "The public values health highly and wants the government to act now to give them better tools to make better choices for their families".

"Ontarians understand the importance of transitioning our industry into the green economy," says Andrew King, National Health, Safety and Environment Co-ordinator for the 250,000 Canadian member strong, United Steelworkers Union, "one in which we invest in good jobs that do not cause ill health and damage to the environment. Working people have experienced the damage that toxic chemicals have done to people at work. The only future that will prevent this happening to everyone is a future in which toxic chemicals are eliminated."

"The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment supports the call for effective government policy to reduce toxic emissions in Ontario. The Take Charge of Toxics campaign aims to protect the health of our patients in Ontario," says Alan Abelson, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

"This poll confirms the public's overwhelming support for a comprehensive toxics reduction strategy in Ontario. Nurses add their voice to this call and urge the McGuinty government to move quickly with a plan that will address the five Rs recommended by Ontario's health and environmental groups, and make it a top priority in the upcoming legislative session," says Wendy Fucile, President, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO).

"The provincial government has made an important commitment to protecting the health of Ontarians by reducing their exposure to toxic chemicals used by businesses. A toxics reduction strategy could stimulate pollution prevention efforts across the province and significantly reduce potential exposure to harmful substances," says Dr. David McKeown, City of

Toronto Medical Officer of Health. "We encourage the government to enact an Ontario toxics reduction strategy without delay."

"A broad consensus among both experts and ordinary Canadians is emerging," said Aaron Freeman, Policy Director, Environmental Defence. "An overwhelming majority want the type of action the province is proposing — to reduce toxic chemicals in our bodies and in our environment."

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE POLL**

- 80% of Ontarians surveyed feel that the issue of toxic chemicals should be a high or somewhat high priority for the Ontario government.
- 96% of Ontarians surveyed support the government's strategy to have industries develop a toxics reduction plan.
  - When asked if the current economic situation caused them to rethink their support, 67% said no.
- 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 feel toxics exist in their environments, are concerned that those toxics affect their health and the health of their families.
- Virtually all Ontarians (99%) felt that they have the right to be informed by an easy-to-read label, or symbol, about harmful chemicals in a product before they buy it.
- 96% of Ontarians also felt that they have the right to be informed about toxic chemicals they are exposed to in their workplace.
- Nearly nine in 10 Ontarians (87%) feel it is 'very important' to substitute toxic chemicals with less harmful chemicals whenever possible.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society from October 14 to 21, 2008. For this survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1,002 Ontarian adults was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Ontario been polled.

### **ABOUT THE TAKE CHARGE ON TOXICS CAMPAIGN**

Take Charge on Toxics is a campaign supported by a broad coalition of respected health, environmental and labour organizations aimed at ensuring Ontario's Toxic Use Reduction legislation exists to reduce 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

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