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Media Release

CELA calls for strong toxics use reduction regulations a Toxics Reduction Act passes

Jun 03 2009

Toronto - The new [Toxics Reduction Act](#), passed today by the Ontario government, will require strong and effective regulations, says the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA).

"Strong action on reducing Ontarians' exposures to toxic substances in their environments, workplaces and homes will help to avoid chronic diseases such as cancers, respiratory illness, developmental and neurotoxic diseases and others," stated Sarah Miller, senior researcher with CELA.

In Ontario we are the second largest emitter in North America for release of developmental/reproductive toxicants; the fifth in North America for release of carcinogens and we emit 36% of air and 50% of water discharges in Canada. In 2006 alone, 879,246,698 kilograms of toxic substances were released in Ontario from just the biggest emitters reporting. These numbers highlight the seriousness of this issue, and CELA has long called for toxic use reduction legislation and has worked hard to encourage government action.

The new law passed by the province focuses on detailed compliance provisions, and sets out requirements for Manufacturing and the Mining Sectors to draft and report on toxic reduction plans. The government says that it will work on the detailed rules to implement the new law over the summer.

"These regulations will determine the success of this Bill" said CELA lawyer Joseph Castrilli. "We urge this government to consult broadly and extensively with all stakeholders on these critical components. CELA expects to continue to work with government to strengthen this Act through the details of its regulations." These include:

- Defining sectors (classes of facilities) and thresholds for substances covered by the Bill,
- Setting out the timing for Phase 2 the majority of 400 of 445 substances proposed to be covered in the Bill by the government's Expert Panel,
- Prescribing the toxic substances and substances of concern (those not yet tracked) in Ontario, and
- Setting out the components of a toxic reduction plan.

CELA continues to call on the province for additional provisions to better protect Ontarians from toxics; measures that have not yet been adopted by the province include establishing a toxic use reduction institute, provisions to require substitution of safer substances when they exist, and establishment of targets and timetables for toxic use reduction in the province.

"Our studies of best practices world-wide have shown that the most successful toxic reduction programs have focused on enabling change through an institute which trains and certifies pollution prevention officers and which work with facilities to maximise success" said Anne Wordsworth CELA Research Associate. "While we support increasing the Ministry of Environment's compliance capacity, we also call for establishment of an institute in this province that would help make Ontario a global leader in safer industry."

"This summer will be critical to acting on the public's growing concerns about the toxics that permeate our lives in Ontario" said Sarah Miller. "Hard economic times can give us opportunities to shift to more sustainable solutions. Bill 167 has this potential to move us from failed pollution control programs to promising pollution prevention programs."

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