

## PRESS RELEASE

### Lung Association today announce that it would hold a Summit on Respiratory Health in response to the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

**December 9, 2005** – In response to the United Nations Climate Change Conference, The Lung Association announces a spring summit on respiratory health. The Lung Association firmly believes that an effective response to climate change will require an integrated effort between different disciplines and interest groups, and must address the impact of air quality on lung health.

The Lung Association is pleased that the Canadian government has taken steps toward reducing air pollution and implementing a plan to fight climate change but we urge the government to go further.

Kenneth Maybee, Vice President of the Canadian Lung Association responsible for environmental issues, and member of the Canadian delegation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP11/MOP1, stressed, “We need to take action both to mitigate climate change and to reduce the impacts. While Canada is a leader in developing a new Air Quality and Health Index to provide warnings and advice to people regarding exposure to air pollution, it is essential that COP 11/MOP 1 gains greater international commitment to take stronger action to reduce greenhouse emissions.”

Many areas of the country continue to be plagued with dirty air, subjecting millions of children, seniors and people with asthma and other lung diseases to breathing dangerous air pollution far too long.

Respiratory disease is the leading cause of short-term disability and it ranked fourth in mortality and morbidity cost. In 1998, Health Canada’s document titled *Economic Burden of Illness in Canada* reported that Lung disease is the leading cause of short-term disability, with a total estimated cost to productivity estimated at **\$2.4 billion**. In 1998, the combined direct and indirect costs of lung diseases in Canada were estimated to be **\$8.5 billion**. Based on 2004 data, the cost of lung diseases would be in excess of \$12.9 billion.

At high levels of air pollution, even healthy people may notice that they cannot take as deep a breath. Exposure results in increased use of medications, doctor’s visits, emergency room visits and hospitalizations. These impacts have health care costs in the billions of dollars annually. Because children breathe more rapidly and inhale more air per breath compared to adults and because they spend more time outdoors being physically active, they tend to be more exposed to outdoor air pollution than adults.

Canadians are concerned about climate change and about the impacts it has on them and on their communities. The 2006 Summit on Respiratory Health will be a catalyst for researchers and decision-makers in all parts of the country to better understand how a changing climate will affect us and the best ways to prepare for these changes.

“All levels of government will need to work together and with public health organizations, communities and interest groups, businesses, and public health practitioners to address the impacts of climate change on health”, added Ken Maybee.

The March 2006 Summit on Respiratory Health will bring together various stakeholders to better understand the various strategies, measures and actions that contribute to our ability to deal effectively with the effects of our climate and climate variability on productivity.

“We know what the issues are, and we know what the consequences would be of delay or inactivity. Now is the time for leadership, and I’m hopeful that the Summit will help lead Canada to effectively manage and prevent the negative effects of climate change on Respiratory health”, said Dr. Darcy Marciniuk, Respirologist and President-Elect of the Canadian Thoracic Society.

The Summit will be a unique opportunity to help develop a comprehensive national framework on how to best address the impact of climate change on the health of Canadians.

For more information please contact Luc Lapointe at (613) 850-0980 or Kenneth Maybee at (506) 455-8961

**“When You Can’t Breathe, Nothing Else Matters”**

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