

For Immediate Release  
February 17, 2006

## **ONTARIO CHALLENGES U.S. TO PROTECT AIR QUALITY**

*Reducing Transboundary Air Pollution Will Benefit All Ontarians*

TORONTO – Environment Minister Laurel Broten today filed comments with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) detailing the Ontario government's concerns with the U.S. government agency's plans to allow higher emissions from coal-burning power plants.

"Air pollution from U.S. coal-fired generators is hurting Ontario's health, and the people of this province are counting on our neighbours to do better," Broten said. "I am calling on my colleagues on both sides of the border to join Ontario in cleaning up the air we share."

Changes to the EPA's New Source Review program would allow coal-burning power plants to operate for longer hours and pollute more per year.

This rule change would likely increase the amount of air pollution coming from the U.S. and lead to increased smog problems in Ontario because it will ease emission controls for a significant number of coal-fired power plants in Midwestern states.

"Smog does not respect international borders, neither do the ill effects," said Dr. Greg Flynn, President of the Ontario Medical Association. "We know that smog can contribute directly to cardiac and respiratory illnesses that can result in death and without a real commitment to cleaning up the air, people will continue to pay the ultimate price - with their lives."

The government of Ontario has begun to do its part by setting a target of generating five per cent of our electricity from renewable sources by 2007 and committing to close down all of the province's coal-powered generators by 2009.

More than half of the air pollution in Ontario originates in the United States, in particular from the electricity production sector. At some Ontario locations, including Sarnia and Windsor, more than 90 per cent of the air pollution can come from U.S. sources.

Transboundary air pollution has a significant and adverse impact on Ontario's economy and its citizens' health. Last year, Ontario had its worst year on record for smog advisories. There were a record 15 smog alerts covering 53 days in the province. And a 2005 provincial study showed that air pollution causes nearly \$10 billion in total damages to Ontario, including \$6.6 billion in health costs.

“We know that smog-causing pollution is taking an unacceptable toll on our health and economy,” said Broten. “I am here today to support our American friends who are fighting to improve the quality of air we all breathe, and to ask leaders on both sides of the border to join me at this year’s Shared Air Summit.”

Ontario currently has ongoing working relationships with the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont, among others, on transboundary air issues.

Shared Air Summit 2006 will take place in Toronto this June and will bring together political leaders, leading scientists, health care professionals, environmentalists and industry representatives from across North America to discuss air quality issues and the impact they have on our health, environment and economies.

A copy of the government’s comments to the EPA, the 2005 Transboundary Air Pollution in Ontario report and an executive summary of the EPA comments can be found at:  
<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/air/transboundary/index.htm>.

Contacts:

Anne O’Hagan  
Minister’s Office  
416-325-5809

John Steele  
Communications Branch  
416-314-6666

*Disponible en français*

[www.ene.gov.on.ca](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca)