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NEW INFORMATION CENTRE TO HELP SMALL BUSINESS MEET REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Pilot Project To Increase Understanding And Awareness

SARNIA – The McGuinty government is helping small business to understand, manage and comply with provincial legislation through a new outreach and education pilot project, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced today.

“We are on the side of small business owners in Ontario,” said Peters at Park Lane Chevrolet Cadillac Ltd. “That is why we have introduced a pilot project to provide small business owners with one-stop shopping for information on regulatory requirements in the auto body sector.”

The Auto Body Repair Compliance Information Centre (CIC) is a new, free website designed to make it easier for auto body shop owners to find information about legislation governing their industry. This will save business owners time and effort and will better protect workers and the public. The pilot will also include outreach and education in order to increase awareness and understanding.

“Helping small businesses to grow and succeed is part of our overall strategy to build a stronger and more vibrant Ontario,” said Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Harinder Takhar. “Because when they succeed, Ontario prospers.”

The information centre was developed through the combined work of the auto body repair industry, shop owners, regulatory ministries and ServiceOntario. ServiceOntario is a government website dedicated to making it easier for Ontarians to do business with the province by providing information and services online, in person and over the phone.

The CIC site launched today at www.serviceontario.ca/autobody.

“This truly is a business-friendly approach,” said Rosanna Armata, executive vice-president of the Collision Industry Action Group (CIAG), a provincial trade association for Ontario’s collision repairers. “By working with the government, we have created a product that addresses the needs of the small business owner, in ways they can understand, while still meeting the regulatory requirements of the province. Everybody wins.”

The Hamilton District Autobody Repair Association (HARA) expressed similar support. “The CIC is definitely a step in the right direction,” said John Norris, executive director of

HARA. "It presents a user-friendly navigation path for small business owners to be able to find provincial regulatory information in one place. That's the real value of the project, and our members look forward to using the site and providing feedback to add to future developments."

"Having one place to go for compliance questions will save a lot of time for shop owners," said Nicole DiBona of the Sarnia-Lambton County Body Shop Association. "It's a big step forward to be able to quickly access the information we need to run compliant businesses."

The Auto Body Repair Compliance Information Centre is one part of a broader modernization strategy to improve and modernize regulatory compliance in Ontario. The other components of the modernization plan include:

- The Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, introduced in February 2006, that would, if passed, play a major role in improving public protection by allowing ministries to make more efficient use of government resources, while also reducing duplication in compliance activities
- A performance-based strategy that would recognize companies with exceptional records of compliance – while targeting businesses that consistently and repeatedly contravene Ontario's laws.

The Auto Body Repair Compliance Information Centre (CIC) and the broader regulatory modernization agenda are examples of how the McGuinty government supports Ontario's businesses. Other accomplishments include:

- Encouraging strong job creation with almost 288,000 net new jobs
- Introducing a refundable apprenticeship training tax credit
- The start of phasing out the province's capital tax, which taxes investment instead of profit, by introducing a five per cent tax rate cut in January 2007 – a full two years earlier than planned.

"The CIC pilot project is just one part of a series of improvements we are making to help Ontario's businesses, especially small businesses and entrepreneurs," said Peters. "Our stakeholders have asked for changes, and we are listening. By launching the CIC, we are assisting companies in understanding and managing their regulatory responsibilities, which will lead to better protection for our people, workers and natural resources."

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