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For Immediate Release
July 28, 2006

ONTARIO TO BETTER PROTECT WORKERS AGAINST HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES *Tougher Exposure Limits Would Help Workers*

TORONTO — The Ontario government is strengthening protection for workers by proposing new or updated occupational exposure limits for 27 hazardous substances, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced today.

“Protecting the health and safety of Ontario workers is a priority for our government,” said Peters. “Exposure to hazardous substances can cause occupational illness, which impacts on individuals and families as well as businesses. That is why we are updating Ontario’s exposure limits based on the most current information available.”

Occupational exposure limits (OELs) restrict a worker’s exposure to hazardous substances on the job. Ontario currently has OELs for over 700 substances. Since the government initiated an annual review process in 2004, 104 OELs have been revised, updated or added.

The Ministry of Labour is undertaking a 60-day consultation to allow stakeholders to comment on proposed new and revised limits and listings for these 27 hazardous substances. This includes proposed limits for two substances for which a limit does not currently exist in Ontario: Coumaphos and Monochloroacetic acid. Revised limits and/or listings are proposed for 25 other substances, including: Silica and Iron Oxide.

This is just one of a number of initiatives the government has taken to support workers on the job. Other measures include:

- The High-Risk initiative, targeting enforcement efforts at Ontario workplaces with the highest injury rates and highest costs in Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims
- The Pains and Strains initiative, targeting musculo-skeletal injuries, which make up a significant portion of all workplace injuries
- Hiring 200 new health and safety inspectors. Of these, 131 are already working across Ontario. All 200 will be carrying out inspections of high-risk workplaces early next year.

To participate in the consultation, submit comments to the ministry at the address provided in the proposal. Copies of the proposal are on the Ministry of Labour website, or are available by calling 416-326-9299. The submission deadline is September 30, 2006.

“The Ontario government wants to consult with all affected stakeholders, including business and labour, before introducing new exposure limits,” said Peters. “The government is on the side of

working families – protecting them from potentially hazardous substances that can cause illness or disability.”

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