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For Immediate Release
September 20, 2006

ONTARIO TO CO-HOST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTORS

Professionals From 100 Countries To Study Ontario's Leading-Edge Methods

TORONTO – The success of the McGuinty government's workplace health and safety initiatives is attracting international attention, as hundreds of enforcement professionals from around the world will be converging at a major international conference in Toronto this coming April, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced today.

“It is a feather in the cap of Ontario and Toronto to host a prestigious international workplace health and safety conference,” said Peters. “It is even more important to see that our innovative approach to preventing both the human and the monetary cost of workplace injuries is producing positive results for the people of Ontario.”

Over the first two years of Ontario's workplace health and safety strategy, there were over 14,000 fewer lost-time injuries to Ontario workers than there otherwise would have been without the strategy. This has resulted in Ontario businesses avoiding more than \$960 million in costs associated with workplace injuries. A lost-time injury occurs when a worker loses wages as a result of a temporary or permanent work injury.

“The Ontario model provides a good framework for building national occupational health and safety strategies in other jurisdictions,” said advisory committee member and International Labour Organization (ILO) representative Gerd Albracht. “Ontario will be an excellent forum for holding discussions internationally when we meet in Toronto next year. This is a topic of international importance. Of the 2.7 billion people who work worldwide, 2.2 million die annually.”

The International Association of Labour Inspection (IALI) annual conference, which is held in co-operation with the ILO, will be in Canada for the first time on April 18-20, 2007 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The conference's advisory committee, representing labour, government and employers, is in Toronto this week to plan the event.

The 2007 IALI conference begins immediately after the annual IAPA conference April 16 – 18, 2007. The IAPA and IALI conferences will share the same theme, “Innovative Strategies for Healthier and Safer Workplaces.”

IALI's members come from more than 100 countries. IALI operates under the auspices of the United Nations' ILO, based in Geneva, Switzerland. These two organizations are co-sponsoring

the conference along with the Ontario Ministry of Labour and Ontario's Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA).

Ontario's health and safety strategy includes:

- Focusing on those firms with the highest injury rates and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) costs – up to 6,000 firms annually – and inspecting the firms up to four times a year
- Hiring 200 health and safety inspectors to address specific workplaces identified as “high risk”
- Giving more than 5,000 other workplaces per year a “last chance” to voluntarily improve their health and safety records, in co-operation with the WSIB and 12 health and safety associations.

“The McGuinty government is on the side of working families and businesses,” said Peters. “Our workplace health and safety initiatives have directly contributed to people's health and to businesses' bottom line. At the IALI conference, we will share our methods with the world's foremost health and safety professionals.”

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