

For Immediate Release  
September 7, 2007

## **GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO CALLS ON U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY TO STRENGTHEN RULES FOR SMOG-CAUSING OZONE**

### *Reducing Ozone Levels Will Help Protect Province's Health and Environment*

TORONTO – Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten today submitted comments to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ask that the U.S. government agency consider the human health and the environment first when revising their national ozone standards.

“Ground-level ozone is a serious threat to human health and environment in this province and throughout North America,” said Broten. “The province of Ontario wants the EPA to consider the environment and the health and well-being of both Canadian and U.S. citizens when they issue the new standard for ozone.”

The current Canada-Wide Standard for ozone is 65 parts per billion (ppb). With these proposed revisions, the United States Environmental Protection Agency is proposing a standard in the range 70 to 75 ppb, with the current standard being 80 ppb.

Ozone is a gas that is a major component of smog. In the upper atmosphere, it blocks harmful ultraviolet radiation. At ground level however, ozone causes inflammation in the lungs at low concentrations, and can severely aggravate chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and pneumonia in healthy people. Children and the elderly feel the effects disproportionately to others. Ozone also causes severe environmental impacts by affecting photosynthesis and respiration in trees and plants that reduces growth rates and affects reproduction.

“As a major component of smog, ozone affects everyone and is a significant contributor to respiratory ailments in Ontario,” said Dr. George Pasut, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario. “I hope the United States Environmental Protection Agency will take this into account when they set the new standards for this pollutant.”

Ontario's position is in line with the United States Environmental Protection Agency's *Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee's* recommendation to lower the U.S. primary standard for ozone and encourages the EPA to adopt a standard comparable to the Canada-Wide Standard for ozone.

This is the second set of comments filed by the government of Ontario with the Washington, D.C. agency in the past 30 days. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, the province submitted comments that outlined Ontario's concerns with proposed rule changes that would allow coal-fired power plants to operate for longer hours and emit more pollutants.

“As Ontario’s Environment Minister and a mother of young twins, it is my duty to ensure that the people of the province are protected from all sources of pollution,” said Broten. “I call upon the EPA to set an ozone benchmark that is protective for all North Americans, now and for the future.”

More than half of certain types of air pollution in Ontario are transported from the United States, in particular from the electricity production sector. At some Ontario locations, including Sarnia and Windsor, more than 90 per cent of smog-causing air pollution, particularly ozone, can come from the U.S. A June 2005 provincial study, *Transboundary Air Pollution in Ontario*, showed that air pollution causes nearly \$10 billion in total damages to Ontario, including \$6.6 billion in health costs.

Transboundary air pollution has a significant and adverse impact on Ontario’s economy and its citizens’ health. In 2005, Ontario had its worst year on record for smog advisories. There were a record 15 smog advisories covering 53 days in the province. So far this year the Province has issued 36 days of smog advisories.

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For more information, including the province’s actions on ozone and clean air, please see the government of Ontario’s comments for the EPA’s National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground-level ozone pollution.

Please also see the attached Fact Sheet: *Ozone in Ontario*.

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