



PREVENTING CANCER THROUGH HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY

Community right-to-know

2010 Municipal Elections

The Canadian Cancer Society is very concerned about toxic substances in our air, water, land and consumer products. In order to reduce Ontarians' risk of developing cancer the Canadian Cancer Society is encouraging municipalities to develop community right-to-know bylaws.

KEY FACTS

What is a community-right-to-know bylaw?

There are three main components:

- **Require local facilities to track and report their use and release of priority toxic substances in communities.**

The Society is calling for municipalities to require the disclosure of toxic substances used by facilities in their communities. The list of priority substances will be determined locally based on consultations with local facilities and health officials.

- **Provide the public with information on key toxic substances in their communities.**

Using some of the data collected from facilities, municipalities would make this information available to the public through an interactive website. This way the public will be able to determine which substances are being used in their neighbourhoods and be able to make informed decisions regarding their health.

- **Provide support for local facilities to help them become more aware of their use and release of priority toxic substances and find ways to prevent this pollution.**

The Society calls on municipalities to provide support and advice to facilities on how to track their use and release of toxic substances which will encourage facilities to reduce.



Why do municipalities need a community right-to-know bylaw?

- Cancer, asthma, infertility, learning problems and birth defects have been increasingly linked with exposure to toxic substances, although more research is needed.
- People who are continually exposed to known or probable cancer-causing substances at high levels or over long periods of time may have a higher risk of developing cancers.
- In North America, Ontario is second only to Texas in the tonnes of toxic chemicals being released into the air and water and going to landfill sites.
- Provincial and Federal laws only include large industries. Municipal bylaws are needed to ensure toxic substances used in small and medium sized facilities are also tracked and reduced.



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The Canadian Cancer Society strongly believes that Ontarians should not be exposed to cancer-causing substances where they live, work and play. Substances that cause cancer should be replaced with safer alternatives. If it is not possible to get rid of the cancer-causing substance or find a safer option, then exposure to it should be reduced as much as possible. At the Society, we strongly support your right to know what you're being exposed to so you can make informed decisions about your health.

The environment, cancer and you

- The exact percentage of cancers linked to exposure to cancer-causing substances is not known. But we do know that people who are continually exposed to cancer-causing substances at high levels or over long periods of time may have a higher risk of developing cancer.
- Much of the research on the links between the environment and cancer has focused on adults. There has been less research looking at the impact of exposure to certain substances early in life. This information is important because researchers believe children may be vulnerable to substances that may increase the risk of cancer, causing birth defects. There are several reasons for this:
 - Children may absorb more environmental contaminants because they breathe, eat and drink more than adults relative to their body weight.
 - Children, especially infants and toddlers, sit more often on the ground and crawl to explore areas where adults typically don't go. As they do, they often put their hands and fingers into their mouths and this can mean that they ingest more chemicals than adults.

What are the benefits of community right-to-know bylaws?

- Protection from the health risks associated with toxic substances and protection of the environment.
- Empowers the community to act as informed consumers and citizens.
- Encourages proactive improvements by businesses and organizations.
- Contribute to a more comprehensive picture of environmental conditions in the municipality and potential health problems.
- Improve labour relations with employees of the municipality where right-to-know results in less worker exposure to hazardous substances.
- Provide emergency services with crucial information about potential hazards.

There is province-wide concern about environmental contaminants

The Canadian Cancer Society knows you're concerned about the links between the environment and cancer.

A Society public poll, conducted by Ipsos Reid in October 2008, indicated:

- 77 per cent Ontarians believe toxic chemicals exist in their environments
- Over 80 per cent of those who believe toxics exist in their environments are concerned that those toxics affect their health and the health of their families.
- 96 per cent of Ontarians feel it is their right to be informed about toxic chemicals they are exposed to in their workplace



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