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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH ASBESTOS

Changes Mean Greater Safety For Workers

QUEEN'S PARK — The Ontario government has made significant improvements to health and safety protections for construction workers who deal with asbestos, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced today during Healthy Workplace Week.

“As part of the government’s ongoing commitment to create safer and healthier workplaces, we have expanded protections based on the latest scientific and technical knowledge about asbestos,” said Peters. “The next step will be introducing improved worker training.”

Most of the changes in the new regulation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act come into effect on November 1, 2005. New training requirements and expanded asbestos management programs come into effect later.

The changes will strengthen worker safety by:

- Ensuring the most-up-to-date safe work methods and procedures are used. These include updated respiratory protection and modernized work procedures
- Providing certified training standards in the future for those involved in more complicated asbestos removal projects
- Providing a clearer definition for “asbestos-containing material”
- Reflecting industry safe practices and removing unnecessary administrative procedures for owners, employers and contractors.

“The Ontario government is committed to ensuring that the health and safety of every worker is never compromised,” said Peters. “These changes have been carefully developed in cooperation with employers and labour, who support this action.”

The new regulation is part of the Ontario government’s ongoing improvements to workplace health and safety. These include hiring 200 new health and safety inspectors; targeting workplaces with poor health and safety performance records and high costs to the WSIB; and putting in place a new annual process to update occupational exposure limits for the over 700 hazardous substances covered by Ontario regulation.

For more information on the new regulation, see the Ministry of Labour website www.labour.gov.on.ca. Healthy Workplace Week is a yearly week-long celebration of workplace health in Canadian organizations. For more information, go to www.HealthyWorkPlaceWeek.ca.

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