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## **Medical Officer of Health calls for action on cancer**

Dr. Sheela Basrur, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, today released a report on environmental and occupational exposure to carcinogens and called on provincial and federal authorities to take action to address urgent public health issues identified by the research.

Dr. Basrur said the report presents a clear challenge: "Multiple exposures to carcinogens in our outdoor and indoor air, and in some food sources and many workplaces, likely contribute to high rates of cancer. But we do not have the basic information to put together a comprehensive prevention strategy. All levels of government need to do much more to fill in the gaps."

The report is an assessment of the potential for exposure to ten key carcinogens in Toronto's workplaces and environment. The research shows that nine carcinogens are present in outdoor air and five are present in indoor air at levels that approach or exceed the "tolerable" benchmark for risk of cancer.

The report calls for three main areas of action:

- The provincial and federal environment ministries expand data collection to include more sources of emissions release, and move quickly to establish health-protective air standards
- The provincial labour ministry and Cancer Care Ontario set priorities for investigating occupational exposure, and work with the provincial ministries of environment and health to set priorities for assessing and reducing occupational and environmental carcinogens
- The Toronto Board of Health identify strategies to reduce the release of the ten carcinogens in Toronto

Dr. Lynn Marshall, Medical Director of the Environmental Health Clinic at Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre, expressed support for the recommendations in the report. "The current state of knowledge on cancer-causing agents in our everyday environments is totally inadequate. This report helps us as a society to press our elected representatives to protect us where we cannot protect ourselves."

The report was prepared by Toronto Public Health in response to the City of Toronto's Environmental Plan and the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition Action Plan. It will be used as a background document for a roundtable of experts and stakeholders being convened in Toronto in May to address cancer prevention strategies.

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