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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ONTARIO TO ROLL BACK AIR QUALITY PROTECTIONS

TORONTO, ON - When Premier McGuinty's government first introduced new air quality regulations in 2005, the province described them as "the cornerstone" of the government's efforts to protect local air quality. This week, the McGuinty government appears poised to undo many of the rules that protect Ontarians from industrial air pollution.

On Tuesday, September 8, 2009, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper filed a written objection to the Ministry of the Environment's proposed rollbacks. The new regulations could exempt entire industries that cannot comply with Ontario's environmental rules, replacing air quality targets with technology requirements. Compliance would be linked to the technology that is used rather than the quality of the air. The new rules could apply to industries such as forestry, foundries and metal mining.

"It is outrageous. The new systems penalizes good corporate citizens and rewards polluters," says Mark Mattson, President and Waterkeeper with Lake Ontario Waterkeeper.

Lake Ontario Waterkeeper has voiced a number of concerns:

- The new system changes the rules for entire industries, without local consultation or scrutiny
- The systemwide rollbacks may not be able to consider the unique needs and concerns of different communities
- By focusing on the technology used rather than the quality of the air, the new rules lose focus on the ultimate goal: clean air

The Ministry of the Environment cites reducing "regulatory burden" as one of the main benefits of the rollbacks.

"Concerns that regulation has become a burden on the Ministry of the Environment are besides the point," says Mattson. "It is a burden to live with smog days, lung disease, or asthma. It is a burden to rely on contaminated fish and water for our survival. Environmental protection is not a burden: it is a duty."

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More information: www.waterkeeper.ca

Lake Ontario Waterkeeper's submission can be found at www.waterkeeper.ca/localair

To schedule an interview with Mark Mattson please contact Ryan LaFlamme at 416.861.1237 or email ryan@waterkeeper.ca