

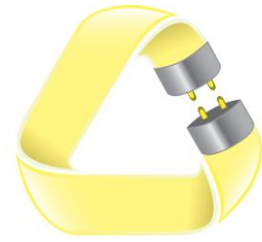


Recycling  
Council of  
Ontario

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Innovative Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Program Surpasses Two Million**

**TORONTO, ON (February 10, 2011)—Recycling Council of Ontario**



**TAKE BACK THE LIGHT**

Take back the Light (TBTL), the first mercury containing lamp stewardship program in Canada designed for the IC&I (Industrial, Commercial & Institutional) sector, has exceeded its first milestone—the capture and safe recycling of more than 2 million lamps—a full 6 months ahead of schedule.

Take Back the Light launched in June 2008 with the original expectation that the program would recover and recycle 1 million lamps by 2011. Recycling Council of Ontario, who conceived, developed and operates the program is “rejoicing at the accelerated pace of participation and acceptance that the program has generated leading into its second full year of operation. Two million lamps represents more than 60 kg (130 lbs) of mercury captured and diverted from disposal”, says Jo-Anne St. Godard, the RCO’s executive director.

Fluorescent lamps contain MERCURY, a hazardous neurotoxin. Disposal of lamps in a landfill results in mercury leaching into the soil, and the water table that feeds our lakes and streams—moving up the food chain as methyl mercury from aquatic flora to fish, wildlife and eventually humans. Methyl mercury is particularly dangerous for the developing nervous systems of young children or fetuses. Inhalation of elemental mercury vapour, in high concentrations, can be hazardous to the human respiratory system and potentially lethal.

Take Back the Light was developed as a response to Government’s decision to phase out incandescent lamps to mandate the use of more energy efficient lighting. RCO recognized that this meant potentially more mercury-containing lamps in the garbage and in the environment.

*[more]*

"We worked intensively for 2 years to introduce a market-based, environmentally safe program for recycling the component parts from fluorescent lamps and the results have substantiated our belief that responsible purchasing and end-of-life management is key to environmental protection", asserts St. Godard.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment funded both the pilot study and the program development of Take Back the Light. The Government of Ontario, through both the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ontario Realty Corporation, has committed to full participation in TBTL by all of its departments and building facilities. This provincial commitment holds the potential to divert tens of thousands of lamps annually, thereby setting an exemplary standard for other governmental jurisdictions.

Take Back the Light is predicated on the principles of green procurement and is designed to function advantageously for the lamp manufacturer, distributor and end user.

"The Take Back the Light program makes Ontario a leader in lamp recycling and keeps hazardous waste out of landfills," said Minister John Wilkinson. "The Ontario Ministry of the Environment is proud to have supported the development of this innovative program that encourages consumers, suppliers and manufacturers to work together to help reduce waste."

Factoid: One-tenth of a microgram of methyl mercury would be enough to contaminate a serving of fish for a 20 kg child. What is one-tenth of a microgram - imagine cutting a paper clip into 1 million pieces, one of these pieces would be one-tenth of a microgram.

Source: Mercury Primer, Pollution Probe

### **Media Contact**

Jo-Anne St. Godard, RCO Executive Director  
416-657-2797 x3; joanne@rco.on.ca

### **About the Recycling Council of Ontario**

*The Recycling Council of Ontario is a charitable organization and member based not-for-profit. It is also the only multi-stakeholder environmental group in Ontario solely dedicated to the 3R's Principles (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). The RCO's mission and mandate is to reduce society's impact on the environment by informing and educating all members of society about the generation of waste, the avoidance of waste and the more efficient use of resources.*

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