

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Throne Speech demonstrates commitment to health, environment: Canadian Lung Association

(Ottawa) - The Canadian Lung Association is pleased that yesterday's Speech from the Throne demonstrated a continued commitment to health and the environment.

"We are very pleased that the government is helping to ensure a sustainable health care system by promising to grow - not reduce – federal transfer payments to the provinces for health and health care," said Heather Borquez, President and CEO of the Canadian Lung Association, "This will help Canada's health care system remain one of the best in the world".

The Canadian Lung Association also acknowledged the government's commitment to improving air quality and to reducing greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

"The Canadian Lung Association was pleased to see the issue of air quality and climate change addressed in today's speech," said Dr. Barbara MacKinnon, Vice Chair of Environmental Policy for the Canadian Lung Association, "We look forward to continuing to work with the federal government in developing measures to improve air quality and to reduce the health consequences of climate change on Canadians".

The cost of air pollution in Canada is estimated to be \$10 billion and leads to approximately 21,000 premature deaths¹ annually. As well, respiratory illness accounts for nearly 40% of hospital admissions associated with exposure to air pollution². In addition, health scientists have expressed concern that climate change could significantly increase risks to Canadians with chronic health problems. Higher temperatures and changed weather patterns are expected to increase concentrations of certain allergenic pollutants and smog conditions in urban centres. This could lead to a greater incidence in asthma attacks and breathing difficulties for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Days with high temperatures and poor air quality will increase emergency room visits and mortalities in people having pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

The Canadian Lung Association also commended the government on its commitment to working with the not-for-profit sector on ways to improve the health of Canadian families.

"We look forward to partnering with the government on innovative solutions to such challenges as tobacco use among young people, rising rates of lung disease among children and increased COPD mortality rates among women" said Cameron Bishop, Director of Government Affairs for the Canadian Lung Association, "We have always found the government to be a committed partner and we are confident that this will continue as we tackle these important issues".

For more information on the Speech from the Throne, please visit: <http://www.speech.gc.ca/eng/index.asp>

¹ "No Breathing Room: The National Illness Costs of Air Pollution", Canadian Medical Association. August 2008.

² Ibid.

About The Lung Association

Established in 1900, The Canadian Lung Association is one of Canada's oldest and most respected health charities, and the leading national organization for science-based information, research, education, support programs and advocacy on lung health issues.

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