

Working Together to Prevent Cancer: Community Right To Know

**November 24, 2004
CELA Annual General Meeting**



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Working Together to Prevent Cancer:



Community Right To Know



Community Right To Know: Definition

A system of public access to a broad range of information on hazardous substance use and release into the environment, as well as the impact on human and environmental health

History of Community Right To Know in Toronto

- ★ 20 year history of CRTK in T.O.
 - ★ BOH directed MOH to investigate in 1983
 - ★ Council directed MOH to draft By-law 1986
 - ★ Draft By-law deferred in 1987 (WHMIS)
 - ★ Need identified in Environmental Plan (2000)
 - ★ Adopted as priority for implementation by City Council (2002)

Community Right-To-Know: Objectives

- ✦ Honours community and worker's rights
- ✦ Assists decision-makers in identifying priorities
- ✦ Improves neighbourhood safety
- ✦ Allows for tracking of progress in toxic use reduction
- ✦ Aids in monitoring, diagnosis and prevention of health effects from hazardous exposures

Proven Benefits of Community Right To Know

- ✦ Enhances emergency response planning
- ✦ Reduces liability
- ✦ Reduces use of hazardous substances by industry
- ✦ Generates cost savings
- ✦ Increases community involvement
- ✦ Reduces risks to workers

Benefits to City of Toronto

- ✱ Decreased hazardous substances/safer communities
- ✱ Safer City workplaces
- ✱ Increased efficiency: consolidated information, accessible to all departments
- ✱ Improved employer/employee relations
- ✱ Enhances Toronto's reputation

CRTK: Perceived Barriers

- ✦ Security
- ✦ Trade Secrets
- ✦ Property Values
- ✦ Costs to businesses

Bottom line: CRTK provides for safer communities and workplaces

Key Carcinogens

- ☀ Asbestos**
- ☀ Benzene**
- ☀ Tetrachlorethylene**
- ☀ Dioxins & Furans **
- ☀ PAH's **
- ☀ Formaldehyde*
- ☀ Cadmium*
- ☀ Chromium*
- ☀ 1,3 Butadiene*
- ☀ Trichlorethylene*
- ☀ Methylene Chloride+
- ☀ Diesel Fuel+
- ☀ Pesticides+

Sources:

*Ten Key Carcinogens in Toronto Workplaces and Environment, Toronto Public Health, March, 2002

+ Preventing Occupational and Environmental Cancer, TCPC Environmental and Occupational Working Group, 2001



Community Right To Know Case Study: South Riverdale/Beaches

To explore current gaps and community needs regarding community right-to-know and develop recommendations to help the City progress in its development of a community right-to-know strategy.

Funding provided by Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) in 2003

South Riverdale/Beaches

- ★ Historical concerns: lead
- ★ Major pollution source in community
- ★ Active/organized community (South Riverdale CHC, Environmental Liaison Ctte., Chinese Environmental Ambassadors)
- ★ Demographics - mix of immigrant lower income and education and Canadian-born higher income and education populations
- ★ Industrial/residential mix
- ★ Recreational/tourist area
- ★ Adjunct to other studies

Methodology

- ✦ Community needs assessment
- ✦ Data review and analysis
- ✦ Evaluation and Recommendations

Community Needs Assessment

☀ Focus groups

- Community-based environmental groups
 - South Riverdale Environmental Liaison Committee (SRELC)
 - Chinese Environmental Ambassadors (CEA)

☀ Key informant interviews

- Toronto Fire Services and TPH Emergency Response
- Workplaces
 - CUPE rep., local healthcare facility
 - Toronto Workers Health and Safety Legal Clinic - (TWHSLC) represents unorganized, minimum wage, immigrant workforce



Focus Groups: Gaps in Community-based Information

- ✱ Lack of access to user-friendly information that leads to action
- ✱ Lack of coordinated effort to disseminate reliable, relevant information
- ✱ Lack of financial support for CRTK initiatives

Key Informants: Emergency Planning and Firefighters - gaps

- ✱ No comprehensive data-base
- ✱ Limited access: chemicals held in buildings
- ✱ Difficult to be proactive: ER limited to individual incidents
- ✱ Existing data requirements not consistently enforced
- ✱ Information not always available from smaller companies
- ✱ Information collected but not consistently shared
- ✱ Limited public access to information

Key Informants: Workplace - gaps

Small, ethnic unorganized workforce vs. medium-sized organized, regulated

- Knowledge of WHMIS, OHSA, exposures
- Joint health and safety committees
- Knowledge of carcinogens
- Access to MSDS sheets
- Health and safety training
- Both identified need for CRTK

Collection of Environmental Data

- ☀ Listing of “higher concern” industries in community (manufacturing, dry cleaning, auto repair, auto body shops, service stations, publishing/printing, film development, photo development, incineration and landscaping)
- ☀ Review of websites:
 - ☀ Canadian Environmental Protection Agency (NPRI, Environmental Registry, Canada Gazette)
 - ☀ Ministry Of Environment (EBR, OnAir),
 - ☀ MOL (press releases)
 - ☀ Pollution Watch
 - ☀ City of Toronto

Summary:

Gaps in Environmental Data

- ✱ Limited data for many “higher concern” companies
- ✱ Limited data for small businesses
- ✱ Exemptions from reporting
- ✱ Difficult to access info on remediations: i.e. Certificates of Approval
- ✱ Accessibility of information
- ✱ Inconsistent information

Project Findings: Environmental Data for South Riverdale/Beach

- ☀ NPRI and Pollution Watch: 11 of 115 businesses (10%) reported results
- ☀ EBR: 2 of 30 businesses (dry cleaners and auto body) MOE search - 10 of 30
- ☀ OnAIR: difficult to access information
- ☀ Gaps:
 - ☀ Limited data for many “higher concern” and small businesses
 - ☀ Information often difficult to access
 - ☀ Inconsistent information

Collection of Occupational Data

- ☀ WHMIS

- ☀ Dry cleaners

- ☀ Auto body shops

 - ☀ NIOSH

 - ☀ Regulations

 - ☀ Studies

Summary: Gaps in Occupational Data & Key Concerns

☀ WHMIS: Limitations

- ☀ Language barriers
- ☀ Trade secrets
- ☀ Accessibility of specific workplace information to the public

☀ Autobody and Dry Cleaning Industries

- ☀ Exposure to carcinogens
- ☀ Cancers: multiple body symptoms
- ☀ Lack of resources
- ☀ Language barriers

Summary: Key Issues from Study

- ★ Lack of access to user-friendly, relevant information for public (data-bases, government agencies)
- ★ Lack of access to comprehensive information for emergency planning, prevention and action
- ★ Small workplaces: lack of access to information - for public, industry exemptions
- ★ Small unorganized workforce: lack of information, resources, training and support

Recommendations

- ✦ In-house inventory
- ✦ Community Right-to-know by-law
- ✦ Develop tools to increase public accessibility
- ✦ Create incentives for industries to reduce use of toxic materials
- ✦ Designate FTE for CRTK

Next Steps

- ✦ Presentation at January BOH
- ✦ Collaboration - form joint sub-committee
- ✦ Do inventory

End