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## **IMPROVING WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS**

The McGuinty government's new plan to improve workplace safety will help protect front-line health care workers against injuries from needles and an influenza pandemic. The following outlines the three-year plan to advance workplace safety in Ontario:

### **Introducing Safety Engineered Needles and Needle-less Systems**

The government is using its regulatory authority under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to make the use of safety engineered hollow-bore needles or needle-less systems mandatory in all hospitals as of September 1, 2008.

The government will consult with relevant stakeholders to introduce an amendment to expand the requirements by 2009 for long-term care homes, psychiatric facilities, laboratories and specimen collection centres, and by 2010 for other health care workplaces.

Safety engineered needles help prevent front-line health care workers from being punctured by a needle stick, which may contain blood-borne diseases. This will improve the safety and quality of health care practices throughout Ontario.

This plan is part of the healthy work environment initiative of the HealthForceOntario strategy.

### **Stockpiling N95 Masks for a Pandemic**

The 2007 Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic emphasizes the need for healthcare workers to use N95 masks in the event of a pandemic. The government is beginning to stockpile an estimated 55 million N95 masks to meet the demand of a four-week period during a pandemic. Further funding through 2010 will help complete the stockpiling.

Healthcare workers will be fit-tested on N95 masks to ensure proper protection as required under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

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