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## **Program Helps Ontarians Conserve Energy and Keep Toxic Mercury Out Of Environment**

***Conservation program ensures safe disposal of mercury-containing thermostats***

**September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 - Toronto, ON** – Ontario’s Chief Energy Conservation Officer Peter Love today safely removed an old mercury-containing thermostat from a Toronto home and replaced it with an energy-efficient programmable model to launch the *Switch the 'Stat* program. This province wide conservation program connects home and business owners with local contractors to install energy efficient programmable thermostats and ensure the safe removal and disposal of the mercury switches found in old mechanical thermostats. The program is run by the Clean Air Foundation, a Canadian not-for-profit organization, and is one of their newest initiatives in Ontario aimed at reducing energy consumption, improving air quality, and protecting the climate.

“*Switch the 'Stat* helps home and business owners conserve energy, save money on their energy bills, and ensures mercury switches are responsibly disposed of,” says Love. “This is an important program that will contribute towards Ontario reaching its provincial energy conservation goal of saving 1,350 MW by 2010.”

Properly disposing of old end-of-life thermostats is critical to protecting our environment from the damaging effects of mercury. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that is detrimental to human and ecosystem health, particularly for fetuses and children. Exposure to mercury can lead to developmental delays, slurred speech, memory loss, difficulty walking, blindness, paralysis, heart disease, kidney failure, liver damage and even death at extreme concentrations. Among other mercury-containing consumer products, many thermostats in use across Ontario still operate with mercury switches. The goal of *Switch the 'Stat* is to replace the majority of older thermostats with new, energy efficient models and to responsibly dispose of the mercury switches.

There are more than 850 heating and cooling contractors across Ontario participating in *Switch the 'Stat* and all Ontario residents and business owners with older, non-electronic thermostats are eligible to participate in the program.

To make the switch even easier, the Ontario Power Authority is offering residents a cash rebate of \$50 off the installation of a programmable thermostat until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007. All Ontario residents with older, non-electronic thermostats are eligible to receive this “Cool Savings Rebate” as well as participate in *Switch the 'Stat*. Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas customers also qualify for an additional \$15 on-bill credit for the purchase of any programmable thermostat.

*Switch the 'Stat* is delivered in partnership with the Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) and Fluorescent Lamp Recyclers and is funded by the Ontario Power Authority, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Union Gas Limited, and Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc.

“*Switch the 'Stat* makes it easy for Ontarians to play a role in conserving energy and curbing the impact of mercury disposal on the environment,” says Cara Sweeny, *Switch the 'Stat* Program Manager. “Homeowners just have to make one phone call and the program, with its partners, takes care of the rest.”

**About Clean Air Foundation** [www.cleanairfoundation.org](http://www.cleanairfoundation.org)

The Clean Air Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing, implementing and managing public engagement programs and strategic approaches that lead to measurable emissions reductions, to improve air quality and protect the climate. The Clean Air Foundation currently manages seven public engagement programs - *Car Heaven, Mow Down Pollution, Keep Cool, Switch Out, Cool Shops, Go Solar, and Switch the 'Stat*. [www.switchthestat.ca](http://www.switchthestat.ca)

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