



## **Focusing on the 3 E's: Education, Environment, Envirothon! Ontario Students test their "natural" ability at Provincial Competition**

**(St. George, ON) May 11, 2009** – From May 6-9, 2009 high school students representing regions from across Ontario showcased their environmental smarts at the 2009 provincial Envirothon competition. The team from University of Toronto Schools in Toronto took first place and is invited to proudly be a symbol of Ontario's environmental aptitude at the Canon Envirothon Championships taking place in Asheville, North Carolina from August 2-8, 2009.

"Programs like Envirothon are essential in bringing together theoretical knowledge with real world experience to drive home the importance of the environment to our youth," says Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Minister of Education. "By teaching students about the interrelationships of the natural environment, the program also shows them what changes they can make in their own lives to help lessen environmental impacts."

The unique team competition is part of a broader environmental education program encouraging students to get outdoors and experience nature first hand in a fun and informative environment. Local conservation organizations partner to provide students with interactive field trips and workshops to help them understand forests, soils, wildlife, aquatic ecosystems and the human impact on the environment. In addition to raising awareness of the needs of Ontario's forests, Envirothon encourages critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and communication skills among participants.

"What's really remarkable about Envirothon students is their genuine understanding of core environmental topics and how they can be applied to current environmental issues," says Carla Grant, executive director, Ontario Forestry Association. "This is tangible knowledge that can't necessarily be learned in a classroom."

Each year, Envirothon allows students to explore a current environmental issue and relate it to the core topics – forestry, soils, wildlife and aquatics. This year the focus has been placed on biological diversity and the many natural processes and functions that are required for the survival of human life. These processes include purification of air and water, recycling of nutrients and fertilization of crops. Envirothon participants learned the importance of biodiversity and the issues and challenges species face in a changing world.

Since its inception in 1994, the annual competition program has grown to reach over 10,000 Ontario students each year with opportunities to learn about the environment. There are 24 regional qualifying challenges throughout Ontario, and the top team from each region advances to the Provincial Championships. The winning team at the 2009 Ontario Envirothon Championship ultimately moves on to represent Ontario as Provincial Champions at the North American Envirothon taking place in North Carolina from August 2 to 8, 2009.

*Ontario Envirothon is a program of the Ontario Forestry Association (OFA), a non-profit, registered charity dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of Ontario's forests, and to developing stewardship of forest ecosystems. Visit [www.ontarioenvirothon.on.ca](http://www.ontarioenvirothon.on.ca) for more information.*

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