



**OBSP celebrates 20 years of high-quality breast screening:**  
*More Than One Million Women Have Benefitted From Life-Saving  
Ontario Breast Screening Program*

Toronto, ON (September 28, 2010) - In the 20 years since it was founded, the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) has provided more than 3.6 million screens to more than 1.1 million Ontario women aged 50-69 and detected more than 19,000 cancers – the majority in the early stages.

“Routine mammograms are the most important step a woman between the ages of 50 and 69 can take to detect breast cancer early,” says **Dr. Linda Rabeneck**, vice president Prevention and Cancer Control, Cancer Care Ontario. “Early detection of breast cancer gives women more effective treatment options and a better chance for a successful recovery.”

In 1990, the OBSP opened its first screening centre in London, Ontario. As of August 2010, the OBSP now delivers services through 153 screening sites across the province including a mobile coach in Northwestern Ontario. In 2009, the OBSP screened more than 396,000 women aged 50-69.

Between 1990 and 2007, breast cancer mortality rates in Ontario women aged 50-69 decreased by 35 per cent. The rate of deaths from breast cancer is the lowest it has been since 1950, a decrease credited both to improved treatments and increased participation in screening using mammography.

While approximately two thirds (66 per cent) of Ontario women aged 50–69 years were screened for breast cancer in 2007–2008 and the screening rate has increased 7 per cent since 2001–2002, there are still too many women who are not getting screened.

“The Ontario Breast Screening Program helps save lives — I would encourage all eligible women to take the time to get screened,” says the **Honourable Deb Matthews**, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario. “Congratulations to the Ontario Breast Screening program on 20 years of success.”

More Ontario women access breast screening through the OBSP than outside of it. The Program is building on this strength within the community and working with partners to ensure even more women are getting screened.

Because mammography is not a perfect test and it may miss some breast cancers the OBSP recommends women be breast aware in addition to having regular mammograms.

“Women need to be better informed about preventative health measures that they can incorporate into their lives, about being breast aware and about the value of getting screened,” says **Dr. Verna Mai**, Provincial Lead, Public Health, Cancer Care Ontario. “We need to do more to reach out to women in communities that are seldom or never screened so that we can extend the benefits of early detection to even more eligible women in Ontario.”

It is important that women talk to their health care providers about breast screening and to also learn about other screening programs for cervical and colorectal cancer.

Women are advised to talk to their healthcare provider if any of the following changes occur to their breasts:

- A lump or dimpling
- Changes in your nipple or fluid leaking from your nipple
- Redness or skin changes that do not go away
- Any other changes in your breasts

Most changes are not cancerous but all changes should be checked by a health care provider.

In addition to regular mammography and being breast aware, women can take the following additional steps to reduce their risk of developing breast cancer:

- Maintain a healthy body weight, especially after menopause.
- Be physically active.
- Have no more than one alcoholic drink per day, if at all.
- Be a non-smoker and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Minimize time on hormone replacement therapy, if used. This should be discussed with their health care provider before making any changes.

To celebrate 20 years of providing high-quality breast screening for Ontario women, the OBSP will be hosting a number of regional initiatives during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Also, the Canadian Cancer Society has partnered with the OBSP to provide a Thingamaboob to every woman screened at an OBSP site during October to help get the conversation started and pass on the message that mammograms save lives.

- To book an appointment at the Ontario Breast Screening Program Site nearest you call 1-800-668-9304.
- For more information on breast, cervical and colorectal screening, please visit [www.cancercare.on.ca](http://www.cancercare.on.ca).
- For more information on the Canadian Cancer Society's Thingamaboob, please visit [www.thingamaboob.ca](http://www.thingamaboob.ca)

Cancer Care Ontario continually improves cancer services so that fewer people get cancer and patients receive better care.