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**MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT WELCOMES FEDERAL ACTION
ON GUN CRIME**

Federal Bill Reflects Ontario-led National Consensus

TORONTO — Attorney General Michael Bryant today pledged support for the federal government's introduction of amendments to the Criminal Code that would, if passed, increase mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes, and would introduce new offences to target gun theft.

"Today, parliament gets the opportunity to send a message to the streets: gun violence will not be tolerated — no matter what role you play, whether you pulled the trigger or supplied the gun," said Bryant.

Following through on a commitment made at the federal-provincial-territorial justice ministers' meeting earlier this month, the federal government has introduced legislation, which, if passed, would:

- Increase mandatory minimum penalties to two years for trafficking in firearms and possession for the purpose of trafficking; firearms smuggling; and illegal possession of loaded handguns in public
- Introduce two new offences to the Criminal Code: break and enter with the intent to steal or where a firearm is stolen; and robbery with intent to steal or where a firearm is stolen
- Expand prohibition order provisions, banning gun possession for offenders
- Restrict parole eligibility for violent firearm offences
- Improve protection for witnesses in firearms cases.

Ontario and the federal government are also moving forward on teams of dedicated prosecutors working together in the Toronto area to take action on gun and related drug crimes.

“This year's surge in gun violence is a huge concern in urban centres, especially in the Greater Toronto Area,” said Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Monte Kwinter. “That's one of the reasons the McGuinty government is providing funding to help GTA police services hire 531 new police officers through our Safer Communities — 1,000 Officers Partnership program.”

In spring 2006, provincial and territorial ministers of justice will review additional proposals to address gun crime in Canada.

“Combating gun violence requires all levels of government to work together,” said Bryant. “This legislation shows that we can work together quickly and effectively to respond to urgent public problems. We can send the appropriate message when it comes to illegal firearms — we have zero tolerance for illegal activity related to the possession and use of firearms.”

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