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VICTIM SERVICES IN ONTARIO

The government of Ontario is committed to ensuring victims of violent crime have a strong voice. Government and community-based services support victims in the immediate aftermath of crime, throughout the criminal justice process and as they work to rebuild their lives.

A broad range of victim services is provided through the following provincially funded programs:

- The Victim Crisis Assistance & Referral Services, a community-response program, provides immediate on-site service to victims of crime or disaster, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The program operates in 41 communities across Ontario, and served more than 68,000 victims province-wide last year alone.
- The Victim/Witness Assistance Program provides information, assistance, referrals and support to victims and witnesses of crime throughout the criminal court process, at 55 sites across the province. Client surveys consistently show that over 90 per cent of clients are satisfied with the services of this program, which maintains close contact with local community agencies to ensure victims can access the full range of services they need.
- The Domestic Violence Court Program provides victims of domestic violence with support from specially trained Crown attorneys, Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff, police, Partner Assault Response programs, language interpreters and other service providers. The program operates in 49 Ontario court districts and will expand to all 54 court districts by the end of the year. It is the most comprehensive program of its kind in Canada.
- The Victim Support Line is a free provincewide information line providing services in English and French, including referrals to community agencies, information on the criminal justice system and access to information about the status and scheduled release date of provincially incarcerated offenders.
- The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic is a multi-service agency for female victims of violence. The Ministry of the Attorney General funds a specialized legal service for assaulted women at the clinic.
- The SupportLink Program provides victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking with intensive safety planning and 911-programmed cell phones in 20 Ontario locations.

- A northern victim services expansion project now provides programs and services for victims of crime, suited to the local needs of victims in five northern communities — Kapuskasing, Greenstone, Michipicoten, Marathon/Manitouwadge and Fort Frances. Initiatives to improve outreach and remote services for victims in five other parts of northern Ontario were also initiated last year.
- Ontario's 37 Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centres are currently operating in 26 communities. One additional French-language centre is in development.
- Child Victim/Witness Centres in three Ontario communities offer court assistance to thousands of children who are victims or witnesses of violent crime each year.
- The Bail Safety Pilot Project, in nine Ontario locations, provides for specially trained teams of Crown counsel, victim services staff and police to conduct in-depth interviews with victims of domestic violence at the bail stage, because this is a time of high risk for victims. The bail safety pilot project helps identify high-risk situations, allowing Crown attorneys to make better recommendations at bail hearings, to help stop the cycle of violence.
- An Internet child anti-pornography and anti-luring strategy is being implemented to offer support to victims and refer them to appropriate community services, including:
 - an undercover team of municipal police officers working online to identify suspects and victims, and prevent further victimization
 - dedicated Crown prosecutors to ensure a uniform level of excellence with respect to victim support and prosecution
 - victim support to ensure that identified victims are connected with the specialized services they need.
- A dedicated 12-member victim-witness assistance team is being put in place as part of the government's Guns & Gangs Task Force
- The Nishnawbe Aski Nation is receiving more than \$700,000 over three years to provide services to male victims in northern Aboriginal communities who have suffered sexual abuse
- The province is committing \$15 million over three years to the Community Grant Program. This program funds projects across Ontario that address gaps in supports and services to victims. The funded projects are short-term and time-limited and do not include regular, ongoing services. All projects must directly benefit victims to be eligible for funding. Seventy-one projects across the province were funded by the program last year.

The McGuinty government has many other initiatives to help victims and to prevent victimization, including the following:

- Committing \$5.9 million to train front-line workers, professionals, neighbours, friends and families across Ontario to recognize the signs of abuse, and help women and children get the supports they need

- Introducing CYBERCOPS software for Grade 7 students has been introduced in Ontario schools, to help cyber-proof children against cyber-stalking, child pornography and Internet luring. The Grade 8 component of the Cybercops program will be introduced in schools early in 2007 with emphasis on cyber-bullying, software piracy and cyber-fraud
- Investing \$4 million over two years in the Employment Training Pilot Program to help women who are victims of domestic violence, or at risk, develop new skills, find employment, and achieve economic independence.

- 30 -

Contact:
Brendan Crawley
Ministry of the Attorney General
Communications Branch
(416) 326-2210

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