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## **ATTORNEY GENERAL ESTABLISHES NEW AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN VICTIM SERVICES**

*Award Of Distinction Recognizes Outstanding Achievement In Victim Services*

OTTAWA — A new award recognizing outstanding achievements by those who provide victim services was established by Attorney General Michael Bryant at the Victim Summit in Ottawa today.

Nominations for the new award, called the Attorney General's Victim Services Award of Distinction, will be accepted starting in January 2007, with the first awards to be handed out in the spring.

“Victims in Ontario are well served by many dedicated professionals and volunteers who provide effective help when it is needed most,” said Bryant. “This new award will recognize the dedication and creativity of these professionals and volunteers, as well as victims who have courageously moved forward to forge a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.”

Bryant announced five categories of award recipients, which may be individuals or groups in Ontario, to be nominated by their peers, victims’ support and advocacy groups, or private individuals.

Nominations will be accepted in the following categories:

- victims and other individuals personally impacted by crime who have raised the profile of victims’ issues in the province
- service providers who deliver outstanding services to victims of crime
- field practitioners who develop and implement the most innovative victim service programs and projects
- volunteers who give of their time and personal resources to help victims
- youth who support victims or otherwise help to prevent revictimization in their communities through individual or group-based initiatives.

Nominations will be reviewed by a committee comprising members of the victim services community, the Ministry of Attorney General, and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC).

“The Office for Victims of Crime is very pleased to play a role in providing such important recognition for those who support victims,” said Ruth Campbell, chair of the OVC. “We are especially enthusiastic about participating in this awards program because it reflects one of our agency’s prime commitments, to support education on the treatment of victims of crime and ways to prevent further victimization.”

The Office for Victims of Crime is an independent agency of the Ministry of the Attorney General, which advises the attorney general on ways to ensure that the principles set out in the Victims’ Bill of Rights are respected, and many other issues relating to victims of crime.

“Recognizing excellence and outstanding achievement is a way to raise the bar even higher, ensuring that victims get services that are even better than before,” Bryant said.

By the end of its mandate, the McGuinty government will have invested more in victims in four years than the previous government did over eight years. Since 2003, the government has invested \$252 million in victim services across the province.

“Ontario’s investment in victim services is a boost to the professionals and volunteers who do a tremendous job of supporting victims and their families”, said Audette Shephard of United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere (UMOVE). “Being a victim is involuntary, but being a survivor is mandatory. That is why I am so pleased to see that the award of distinction will offer much deserved recognition to those who support victims.”

Detailed criteria for the award, information about the nomination process and nomination forms will be available early in the New Year on the ministry website, at [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca). They will also be distributed directly to the victims’ community by the Ontario Victim Services Secretariat, part of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

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