

introduction

There was a steady rise in hate crimes and hate incidents in the 1990's, and an unprecedented increase immediately following September 11, 2001. In the wake of a documented 93% increase in the number of hate crimes in Ontario in the past decade, the Government promised support for dedicated hate crime police units across the province and strong victims' rights legislation to ensure victims have access to information and services.

In May 2005, the Attorney General and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced their intention to establish a Hate Crimes Community Working Group, whose function would be to advise the government on sensible ways of preventing, reducing and redressing hate crime and of meeting the needs of hate crime victims.

Last December, following a public nominations process, the Ministers announced the names of the Working Group's chair and members (see Appendix A) and the Working Group's formal terms of reference (Appendix B). The Working Group began meeting in January 2006. Our members committed to building on their own knowledge, extensive previous work on the topic, the lived experience of members of victimized communities, and the expertise of academics, lawyers, service providers, law enforcement and government officials involved in the field. We undertook six months of intensive deliberations, a literature review, community and stakeholder engagement through presentations, community meetings and focus groups (see Appendix C for the list of Participants and Contributors).

This Report presents the **Strategy, Recommendations and Priorities for Action**, setting out the essence of the Working Group's conclusions. The **Background and Resources** document (see Appendix D for Table of Contents) is intended as a companion piece to the report. It sets out in greater detail the results of our research, including a literature review and a more in-depth presentation of the empirical findings that led to the development of the proposed strategy and recommendations. The resource document also provides a compendium of existing community-based and government victim services, a bibliography of resources, and an overview of promising local, national and international initiatives that can serve as models for the development of more effective support mechanisms for victims, as well as preventive measures to reduce hate and hate crime.

We have attempted to do justice both to the voices of victims and the many people who are passionately committed to addressing hate and hate crime in Ontario. The members of the Working Group look forward to the government's prompt acceptance and implementation of this report.