

ANNUAL REPORTS

2002-2003

2003-2004

Ministry of the Attorney General



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- *Ministry Overview*
- *Annual Report 2002-2003*
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MINISTRY OVERVIEW

The Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) is responsible for providing a fair and accessible justice system that reflects the needs of the diverse communities it serves across government and the province. It strives to manage the justice system in an equitable, efficient and affordable way.

The ministry has five major program areas:

- prosecuting crime and preserving public order and personal safety;
- supporting victims of crime throughout the criminal justice system;
- providing criminal, civil and family courts and related justice services that are fair, timely and accessible;
- providing decision-making and justice support services to vulnerable people; and
- providing legal advice and services to government.

MAG provides expert legal services to ministries, agencies, boards and commissions. These services include: advice on legislative reform, labour relations and public law matters; litigation services relating to constitutional and civil challenges; and regulatory prosecutions.

The ministry is responsible for Legal Aid Ontario (LAO), an independent operational services agency responsible for the administration of legal aid in Ontario. Its mandate is to deliver high quality cost-effective legal aid services to low-income Ontarians. MAG is responsible for funding LAO and ensuring that the agency is accountable and ultimately responsible for the delivery of legal aid in Ontario.

The ministry became responsible for the Human Rights Code in 2003-2004 and for coordinating Ontario's obligations under international human rights treaties and agreements. The Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, which are arms-length, quasi-judicial agencies responsible for administering the Code, are within the Attorney General's policy and administrative responsibilities.

The ministry maintains public accountability for the administration of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, the Assessment Review Board, the Ontario Municipal Board, the Board of Negotiation and the Special Investigations Unit. Decision-making by these bodies is independent of the ministry.



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PROSECUTING CRIME

On June 30, 2003, the ministry announced funding for the Justice Delay Reduction Initiative (JDRI) to deal with the growing delay in the processing of criminal cases in the Ontario Court of Justice. Funding was allocated for the appointment of 15 new judges to the Ontario Court of Justice and the hiring of new Crown attorneys, and other staff to support court operations and help victims.

The ministry announced the creation of a new task force to combat the increasing rate of gun and gang-related crimes in Ontario. The ministry doubled funding for the Youth Justice Committee program to give more low risk young offenders an alternative to the court-based system.

FAMILY JUSTICE SERVICES

The Ontario Public Guardian and Trustee implemented a new IT system to improve program efficiency and enable measurement of key performance indicators. Similarly, the Supervised Access program developed electronic data collection and reporting systems to streamline processes and obtain reliable, timely information for reporting and accountability.

MAG continued to work with Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) to improve governance and accountability reaffirming the provision of quality, client focused legal aid services. LAO opened three new criminal law staff offices, along with several other initiatives.

LEGAL SERVICES

MAG provided high quality legal services to government in ministries, agencies, boards and commissions. The legal services supported MAG's vision by being innovative, strategic and effective. Using a coordinated management model, MAG also represented the government in high profile litigation and inquiries. As well, MAG began implementation of a cross-government IT case management system to track and monitor legal issues.



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COURT SERVICES

To ensure timely and efficient case processing, MAG implemented a new electronic court case tracking system for civil and family courts in 35 court sites across Ontario.

During the previous fiscal year, MAG established a model electronic courtroom at 393 University Avenue Superior Court of Justice in Toronto. The courtroom is a test environment for the use of advanced in-court technology. Pilot testing and evaluation of the facility continued through 2003-04.

Similarly, the Video Remand Project has implemented 125 installations in courthouses, correctional facilities, First Nations buildings and Ontario Provincial Police detachments. This allows an accused person to appear in court by video conferencing from a police station or correctional institution. Video remand reduces the number of prisoners who must be transported to and from court.

MAG also initiated an annual client satisfaction survey program to regularly monitor all court services and programs.

VICTIM SERVICES

The government consolidated victim services from three justice ministries into the Victim Services Division to provide a single point of accountability for the management and delivery of services to victims of crime. The Division became the Ontario Victims Services Secretariat in 2003.

The ministry awarded \$7 million to 71 community-based projects and agencies aimed at improving support and services for victims of crime. Funding was also increased to the province's 36 sexual assault crisis centres in 29 communities.

MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION

This program area provided for the overall administration of the ministry, supplying administrative and support services for operating programs. The ministry continued to implement and develop standards to improve overall service delivery.

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	Ministry Expenditures (\$ millions)	
	2003-2004 Actual	
Operating		1199
Capital		24
Staff Strength (<i>as of Mar. 31, 2004</i>)		6890.3

NOTE: Starting in 2002-2003, major tangible capital assets owned by provincial ministries (land, buildings and transportation infrastructure) are accounted for on a full accrual accounting basis. Other tangible capital assets owned by provincial ministries will continue to be accounted for as expenses in the year of acquisition or construction. All capital assets owned by consolidated government organizations are accounted for on a full accrual basis.



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PROSECUTING CRIME

To improve service delivery, MAG implemented two case management pilot projects and expanded Youth Justice Committees from six to 22.

FAMILY JUSTICE SERVICES

MAG expanded supervised access province-wide to more than 77 sites. The Ontario Children's Lawyer implemented a new database to improve program efficiency. The Ontario Public Guardian and Trustee introduced a new investment strategy for common fixed income funds.

LEGAL SERVICES

To improve client satisfaction with services, a sub-committee was established to examine the role of the director in legal branches across government. Orientation sessions for newly hired counsel were delivered and a new Intranet website was launched for the Legal Services Division.

COURT SERVICES

MAG established the Child Protection Backlog Committee including representatives of the judiciary, bar and Children's Aid Societies to address backlog issues throughout court offices across the province. In addition, expert working groups were established to develop enhancements to information technology and to identify and develop consistent best practices for managing child protection cases.

MAG began implementation of a new case tracking system for civil, family and small-claims court cases to improve overall court services and eliminate manual data collection. A model electronic courtroom was established, resulting in integrated technologies that support in-court processes.



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VICTIM SERVICES

The Domestic Violence Work Team coordinated implementation of the Domestic Violence Court Program at 31 court sites across Ontario. Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services expanded from 35 to 38 sites and Partner Assault Response programs increased from 21 to 36 sites during fiscal 2002-03. The Victim/Witness Assistance Program also expanded from 39 to 48 sites.

MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION

MAG launched a new intranet website (MAGnet) to improve communication to staff and facilitate access to corporate resources.

Completion of a Financial Delegation of Authority included a web-based training tool kit for self-learning including relevant financial signing authority, risk assessment forms and other useful resources.

MAG continued to strengthen operating program oversight. In addition, ministry compliance rates regarding Freedom of Information requests rose to 86 per cent.



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	Ministry Expenditures (\$ millions)	
	2002-2003 Actual	
Operating		1052
Capital		43
Staff Strength (<i>as of Mar. 31, 2003</i>)		6592.1

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For further information about the **Ministry of the Attorney General** visit our Internet site at www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca. You can find annual reports for other Ontario government ministries online at www.gov.on.ca under "About Government".

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