

For Immediate Release
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**MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE
BY RELOCATING AND EXPANDING CIVIL COURT FACILITIES**
Nine New Courtrooms To Provide More Efficient, Effective Court Services

TORONTO — The McGuinty government is increasing access to justice by relocating a number of civil courtrooms in downtown Toronto to a larger, more modern and efficient facility, Attorney General Michael Bryant announced today.

“We are committed to improving access to justice,” Bryant said. “That’s why we are enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of Toronto civil courts by moving operations to a new location and expanding the capacity of the civil court system.”

Some of the civil court facilities at 361 University Avenue in Toronto will be relocated to a bigger and more modern space at 330 University Avenue. The existing facilities include three civil courtrooms and two civil motion rooms. The new location will have a total of nine courtrooms, which will also accommodate long civil trials as well as providing office space for administration and mediation.

The courtrooms formerly used by the civil courts at 361 University Avenue will be renovated to accommodate Ontario’s first major crime court.

“The Ontario Bar Association applauds this prudent investment in Ontario’s judicial system,” said Heather McGee, President of the Ontario Bar Association. “It is both a significant step forward in both improving timely access to justice, and enhancing security in Toronto’s criminal and civil courts.”

“The government is to be commended for finding a practical way to both improve civil court operations in Toronto and make room for the province’s first major crime courtroom,” said Linda Rothstein, President of the Advocates Society. “We look forward to working out of more effective spaces at both 361 and 330 University Avenue.”

The new civil courtrooms will be operational in fall 2006 and will occupy space previously leased by the federal government for court operations. Minimal retrofitting will be required to prepare the new facility for provincial civil court operations.

This relocation is just one way the McGuinty government is improving access to justice for Ontarians. Other initiatives include:

- Implementing a new regulatory scheme to protect people who hire lawyers on a contingency fee basis. Contingency fee agreements lower the cost barrier for people seeking access to justice.
- Introducing legislation that would, if passed, amend the Limitations Act to give potential litigants and businesses the opportunity to reach their own arrangements on limitation periods. A limitation period is a time period that sets out how long a person has to start legal proceedings.
- Providing low-income Ontarians with greater access to justice through court fee waivers. People who meet the eligibility criteria automatically qualify for fee waivers, while those who do not qualify may ask a judge, in writing, for a waiver.

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