

For Immediate Release
May 24, 2006

**McGUINTY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES ONTARIO'S
FIRST MAJOR CRIME COURT**

TORONTO — The province's first major crime court, designed to accommodate large, complex gang-related trials will be operational by this fall, Attorney General Michael Bryant announced today.

“This first major crime court is part of our government's Anti-Guns and Gangs Strategy,” said Bryant. “Gang prosecutions often involve multiple accused and heightened security requirements. This major crime court will be equipped to meet the extraordinary requirements of large-scale prosecutions.”

The courtroom at 361 University Avenue, in Toronto will be enhanced with extra security measures, a separate enclosed entrance for witnesses, multiple-accused prisoner boxes and holding cells, larger jury boxes, specialized technical systems to allow for the presentation of a large volume of evidence.

Many of these extra features will be mobile and flexible so that they can be used in trials across the province. The courtrooms will be designed to meet the requirements of large complex trials but also allow them to be used in other criminal trials when major-scale prosecutions are not before the courts.

Several civil courts currently housed at 361 University Avenue will be moved to 330 University Avenue in order to make room for the major crime courtroom. Construction at 361 University is set to begin this August and it is expected the major crime courtroom will be operational by fall 2006.

“As a result of the Guns and Gangs Task Force, there have been a significant number of gang takedowns with many arrests, which are making their way through the court system,” said Bryant. “Our prosecution team has been expanded and now we are upgrading our courtrooms to increase our criminal justice system's ability to accommodate these cases as they make their way to trial.”

The McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families concerned about crime and safety. That is why the government is implementing a \$51-million package of initiatives to fight gun crimes. The package includes:

- expanding the number of Crown prosecutors working on the Guns and Gangs Task Force to 64
- establishing a state-of-the-art provincial operations centre to allow for highly coordinated investigations and prosecutions of guns and gang-related offences
- fast tracking the hiring of 1,000 additional police officers so that they can be on the streets by the end of 2006.

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