

For Immediate Release  
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**MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENING  
HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS IN ONTARIO**

*Legislation Would Modernize The Human Rights System, Better Serve The Public*

TORONTO — The McGuinty government has introduced legislation that would, if passed, improve and strengthen the promotion, advancement and enforcement of human rights in Ontario, Attorney General Michael Bryant announced today.

“Our government is committed to promoting human rights, fighting discrimination and protecting the vulnerable,” said Bryant. “A modernized Ontario Human Rights Commission would become a stronger champion of human rights, focusing on the prevention of discrimination, while the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario would be given greater powers to resolve individual disputes fairly, quickly and effectively.”

Under the proposed Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006, the Ontario human rights system would be improved by:

- Strengthening the role of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in preventing discrimination by focusing its work on proactive measures such as public education, systemic advocacy, promotion, research and analysis
- Allowing discrimination claims to be filed directly with an enhanced Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) and be resolved quickly and effectively through mediation, adjudication and enforcement
- Creating a new Human Rights Legal Support Centre that would provide information, support, advice, assistance and legal representation for those seeking a remedy at the tribunal
- Establishing two new secretariats, an anti-racism secretariat and a disability rights secretariat, within the OHRC.

“The commission will continue to work with the government to build a renewed human rights system that maintains Ontario’s position as an international leader in human rights,” said Barbara Hall, chief commissioner of the OHRC.

“Under this legislation, Ontarians would be able to have their human rights complaints resolved quickly, efficiently and effectively,” said Michael Gottheil, chair of the HRTO. “I look forward to working with the government on implementation.”

“I applaud the Attorney General's legislation to reform the human rights system,” said Ruth Carey, executive director of the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic (Ontario). “Human rights and community groups have asked for this for many years. We welcome this government's commitment to human rights.”

“We are acting on calls for change to our human rights system that have been heard for over a decade,” said Bryant. “This new law would ensure that the system improves services to the public and advances human rights in this province.”

- 30 -

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