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Ministry of the
Attorney General

Ministère du
Procureur général

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ONTARIO PROVIDES IMMEDIATE NEW RESOURCES TO FIGHT GUN CRIME

The Ontario government is intensifying its ongoing effort to fight gun violence. The Premier today announced new and immediate funding, which will give police and Crown prosecutors additional resources to investigate and prosecute gun crimes. This investment will ensure that the justice system has the resources it needs to bring people who commit gun crimes to justice.

Also, as part of its anti-gun strategy, the government will continue to work with all levels of government and members of the community to find legislative changes and community-based initiatives to end gun violence.

Initiatives Announced Today:

Provincial Operations Centre — Establishing a state-of-the-art operations centre that will bring expertise and technology under one roof. This will better allow for highly co-ordinated investigations and prosecutions of guns and gang-related offences. The Centre participants will include the newly expanded Toronto Guns and Gangs Task Force, the Toronto Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, Crown prosecutors, support staff, probation and parole officers, and victim services staff. Federal participation in the Operations Centre is currently being discussed.

Further Expansion of the Toronto Guns and Gangs Task Force — The task force, which will be housed in the Provincial Operations Centre, will be increased by an additional 31 Crown prosecutors, and additional support staff, and 12 victim/witness services staff. This is in addition to the expansion of 32 Crown prosecutors and 26 experienced police officers announced by the Attorney General in October 2005.

Police officers, Crown prosecutors and support staff from the Victim/Witness Assistance Program on the task force work together from the first day of an investigation. The Crown prosecutors provide early legal advice to police, especially on search warrants or other issues arising from an investigation. They will also, where appropriate, get legal authorization for the police to conduct wiretaps. After charges are laid by police, the Crown prosecutors prepare and conduct the prosecutions.

An additional 15 OPP officers are being assigned to the Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit and will be located in the Provincial Operations Centre to work with the Guns and Gangs Task Force.

Housing all this expertise under one roof will enhance the collective ability to work together and instantly share crucial intelligence and skills.

Immediate Funding for Policing in High-Priority Areas — Providing \$5 million in immediate funding to the Toronto Police Service to intensify their offensive against gangs in high-priority areas of the city. This effort will include the establishment of three rapid response teams each consisting of 18 highly-trained police officers, specializing in drugs and guns interdiction. The funding will also provide for the installation of security cameras at targeted locations, as well as the expansion of the capacity of the police to obtain wiretap and search warrants.

Major Crimes Court — Establishing courts designed to increase the criminal justice system's capacity to respond to large-scale prosecutions. The courts will be equipped with high levels of security and be capable of dealing with multiple defendants. Three new judges will also be appointed in order to deal with any additional volume of work.

1,000 Additional Police Officers — Fast-tracking the hiring and training of the remaining 1,000 new officers so that they can be on the streets by the end of 2006. Of these, 151 new officers will join the Toronto Police Services as early as this summer. Since 2003, 99 new officers have been hired in Toronto and 400 have been hired across the province.

Bail Blitz Teams — Establishing bail blitz teams consisting of police, Crown prosecutors and duty counsel who work together to expedite the bail court process at certain sites for criminal cases, including those involving guns. The teams will also ensure that accused are dealt with quickly and appropriately and that public safety is enhanced.

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