

For Immediate Release
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**MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT UPHOLDS THE IDEALS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY TO ELIMINATE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**
*Strengthening Ontario's Human Rights System Would Improve Access To Justice
For Those Facing Intolerance*

TORONTO — The McGuinty government is reconfirming its commitment to strengthen and improve Ontario's human rights system, Attorney General Michael Bryant announced today while marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

“Racism, whether in individual behaviour, or as systemic or institutional discrimination, is a violation of human rights and dignity,” said Bryant. “It is up to each of us to fight racism, to stand up, speak out and state loud and clear that racial discrimination and intolerance is unacceptable to us in any form, at any time. Our province will be stronger for our actions.”

On February 20, 2006, Bryant announced his intention to introduce legislation later this spring that would, if passed, modernize Ontario's human rights system.

Under the proposed new model, the Ontario Human Rights Commission would focus on advancing human rights and preventing discrimination through proactive measures, such as public education, research and monitoring to address systemic discrimination. The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, meanwhile, would provide a modern, streamlined, and efficient way of resolving disputes by allowing individuals or groups to file claims directly with the tribunal.

“The changes I have proposed will provide more support to claimants and respondents, and these changes will in turn provide more access to the tribunal for more people,” said Bryant.

The government would also establish an anti-racism secretariat within the commission that would provide recommendations and advice to the chief commissioner about research and policy to fight racism.

“This province led the way in supporting human rights back in 1962 when Ontario enacted the first human rights code in Canada,” said Bryant. “We are continuing to lead the way by strengthening our human rights system and improving access to justice for those who face discrimination.”

March 21 marks the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa in 1960, when 69 peaceful, anti-apartheid demonstrators were killed. In 1966, the United Nations declared the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to commemorate this tragedy and in memory of all those who have died around the world fighting against racial intolerance and discrimination.

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