

July 27, 2006

## ONTARIO'S YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEE PROGRAM

The McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families and communities concerned about crime and safety. That's why it is strengthening the youth justice system, including the Youth Justice Committee (YJC) program — to help keep Ontario communities strong and safe. Youth Justice Committees are part of an innovative and comprehensive approach to holding youth in trouble with the law accountable for their actions, keeping young people out of the court system and out of custody, and helping to set them on a more productive path.

### **Community Role in Public Safety**

The YJC program is an alternative to formal court proceedings, and provides an opportunity for communities to play an important role in improving public safety. The YJCs are made up of community volunteers, the young person in trouble with the law, his or her parents, and the victim, if they want to participate. Together, they work out an appropriate way for the youth to make amends for his or her actions. A local steering committee, chaired by the local Crown attorney, and including police, victim services, probation, Legal Aid Ontario and defence lawyers, oversees the program.

The McGuinty government is doubling funding to community agencies to support the Youth Justice Committee programs. Agencies must apply annually for funding after being selected by the steering committee of local justice system representatives.

### **Holding Youth Accountable**

Police may refer a youth to a committee before a charge is laid, or the Crown may refer a youth after a charge is laid. In order for a young person in trouble with the law to be referred to the committee, he or she must be prepared to be accountable for his or her actions, be willing to participate in the program and be aware of his or her rights and options. Only lower-risk offences like mischief, theft and minor assaults, can be referred to YJCs. Offenders who do not agree, or comply with the sanctions, may be returned to the formal justice system.

## **Youth Justice Committee Sites**

Youth Justice Committees were first established in 1999 in six locations in Ontario, and expanded in 2001 and 2004. The creation of 23 new committees brings the current number across the province to 46. These new sites include Elgin County, Guelph, Lambton County, London, Chatham/Kent, Oxford County, Brantford, Caledon/Dufferin, Haldimand/Norfolk, Halton Region, Lindsay, Peterborough, Kingston, L'Original, Pembroke/Petawawa, Perth, Haileybury, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins/Moosonee/Moose Factory, Kenora and Thunder Bay.

There are currently committees in Cornwall, Scarborough (including Malvern), Barrie, Port Colborne, Kitchener, Belleville, Brockville, Cobourg, Hamilton, Huntsville/Muskoka, Newmarket (York Region), Windsor, Whitby, Haliburton, Walkerton, Owen Sound, Armstrong, Nipigon, Fort Frances, Marathon, the Region of Peel and Jane/Finch/Etobicoke and Ottawa.

- 30 -

Contacts:  
Valerie Hopper  
Ministry of the Attorney General  
(416) 326-2202

*Disponible en français*

[www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca)