

For Immediate Release

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**COALITION OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS  
TO ADDRESS YOUTH VIOLENCE IN TORONTO**  
*Working together to bring hope and healing to our community*

TORONTO — The coalition of Christian leaders is closer to implementing a plan to address youth violence in Toronto thanks to an Ontario government grant of \$3 million, coalition co-chair Pastor Michael Morris announced today.

“The blood of our young people flowing in the streets compels us to act,” said Morris. “We applaud the provincial government for recognizing and acting on the need to help our youth find alternatives to violence, build self-esteem, turn their lives around and realize their full potential.”

The announcement was made at a press conference held at the Toronto West Seventh Day Adventist Church where Toronto youth Amon Beckles was gunned down last November.

“We’re here not only because this is a community of faith, but because we have faith in this community,” said Premier McGuinty. “Faith that there is no problem so big that it cannot be solved if we come together, work together and dream, together.”

In 2005, 52 of 78 homicides in Toronto were committed with guns by Black young men shooting other Black men. While many Christian leaders have been working individually and collectively to provide solutions, Boston-based Dr. Eugene Rivers, who visited Toronto earlier this year to share lessons he learned in successfully addressing youth violence in his city, has acted as a catalyst encouraging a more coordinated response from the Toronto community of church leaders.

“The Toronto Community Foundation is pleased to assist the leadership of Toronto’s Black community in their efforts to stop youth violence and promote a safer community for all residents of Toronto,” said President and CEO, Anne Swarbrick. A charitable organization dedicated to improving life in Toronto, the Toronto Community Foundation is a key partner who will play an important role in the implementation of the coalition’s plan.

The coalition will emphasize mentorship and role modeling as it focuses on four key priority areas:

1. Strengthening the family because it is the most important influence in a young person’s life
2. Education to improve youths’ prospects for the future
3. Employment action to increase economic opportunity for youth, and
4. Crime prevention, rehabilitation and building bridges between youth and police and justice authorities.

“We want to be God’s instruments in bringing hope to our young people and their families and healing for our city,” said coalition co-chair Pastor Alvin Nicholson. “We will work with youth, government and church-based and community partners, to help improve the quality of life for people in Toronto.”

For more information, please contact:

Pastor Michael Morris  
Co-Chair, Coalition of Christian Leaders  
647-688-1631

Pastor Alvin Nicholson  
Co-Chair, Coalition of Christian Leaders  
416-725-3844