

**Remarks by Pastor Michael Morris  
Co-Chair, Coalition of Christian Leaders  
at Premier McGuinty's Announcement  
of \$3 Million to Faith Groups  
for Communities Affected By Violence**

April 29, 2006

Thank you Dr Qaadri and Ms Swarbrick for your support in this most important work.

I am Pastor Michael Morris, co-chair of the Coalition of Christian Leaders

A little over 5 months ago 18-year old Amon Beckles was gunned down as he was about to enter this very building to attend the funeral of his best friend, 17-year old Jamal Hemmings.

One of your pastors, Rev King referred to this double tragedy as a wake up call. I'm pleased to announce today that our churches have been roused from their slumber - we have heard the call. We hear the blood of our young men crying out to us. It is their blood flowing in the streets that compels us to act.

There's an old African proverb that says "it takes a village to raise a child." inherent in that proverb is the understanding that our children are a community responsibility. Thus if 1 child hurts, we all hurt; if 1 child is devastated, we're all devastated; if 1 child dies, we all grieve.

The scriptures shed additional light on the meaning of that proverb when it says in Ecclesiastes 4:9, "Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor." So there is not only the sense of people coming together, but actively co-laboring and collaborating in the upbringing of all their children

So we are excited that the churches - the community of faith - has come together to support and uplift our children

In fact we'd like to publicly acknowledge 2 of our partners from the wider church community who are walking with us and provided letters of support when we submitted our proposal

I'm just going to ask Rev Colin McCartney, Executive Director of Urban Promise and Major Geoff Ryan of the Salvation Army to stand that we might acknowledge you. Thank you gentlemen.

While we are grateful for the support of the churches, we recognize that our village consists of far more than just churches. So we are just thrilled that our fellow villagers - the Ontario government and the Toronto Community Foundation - have come alongside us to partner with us, as together we work to bring hope to our young people and their families and healing to our community

And we propose to do this by focusing on 4 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.

And the common thread running through each of these areas will be an emphasis on mentoring and role modeling.

An overly ambitious undertaking? Absolutely not! For as the Premier has already stated, “no problem is so big that it cannot be solved if we come together, work together and dream together.”

The scriptures confirm that, when God in describing the people attempting to build the tower of Babel says, “indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.”

In other words, there is power in unity and community.

So today, on behalf of the Coalition of Christian Leaders in collaboration with the Government of Ontario and the Toronto Community Foundation, I extend an invitation to all our fellow villagers who have heard the call, who feel compelled to act because the blood of our young people is crying out - we invite you to partner with us.

Come let us co-labor together to bring hope to our young people and their families and healing to our community

We just celebrated Easter 2 weeks ago, where we are annually reminded that no situation is ever buried so deep or so long that God cannot resurrect it. Therefore, hope delayed is not hope denied.

So again, we invite you, fellow villagers, come, and let us together bring hope to our young people and their families and healing to our community.

Thank you and may God bless and keep you.