

**Remarks By Dalton McGuinty, Premier Of Ontario
to Faith Groups Announcing \$3 Million
for Communities Affected By Violence**

April 29, 2006

It's great to see so many families here, children and parents.

I have a particularly soft spot for mothers. You know, my own dad passed away 16 years ago so I make a real effort to stay in touch with my own mom. I was talking with her recently over the phone, and I was telling her that I had a particularly hard day, and I was telling her about some of the trials and tribulations associated with my job, looking for a little bit of sympathy.

She said, "I don't know about your work as Premier, but as a son, there's still lots of work for improvement."

I think mothers are the same everywhere.

It's funny though -- as Premier, you never know how you're going to be called upon to serve your public. Here's one of my favourite stories, which has the benefit of being true.

Terri and I were out shopping for groceries. We have four children, between the ages of 20 and 24. The grey hair that's coming in is not from the job. It's from the kids. So, my wife had abandoned me in the grocery store and I was pushing the cart down a particular aisle. And there was an elderly woman there, who was hunched over her cart, and she obviously recognized me. Furthermore, it was apparent to me that she was lying in wait. So as I approached her, with some trepidation down the aisle, at some point she said to me, "Mr. McGuinty, there's some thing that I need you to do for me."

So, I'm thinking to myself, "It's got to be taxes or health care or the price of electricity -- something like that."

So finally I worked up the nerve and said, "Ma'am, how can I help you?"

You know what she said to me? "Get me the cookies on the top shelf."

Never have I felt so useful as Premier as I did on that particular occasion.

My friends, let me say, on behalf of our government, what an honour it is for me and my colleagues to join you here today, and to pass along, as well, regrets on behalf of my Minister of Children and Youth Services, Mary Anne Chambers, who is confined to bed today -- she is suffering from a pneumonia, but she would really have loved to have been here today to join you.

I want to thank Pastors Chichester and King, here at this church, for allowing me this opportunity. And I want to say how thankful we are for the great work being done by the Toronto Community Foundation, in partnership with the Coalition of Christian Leaders. And if I

may, I'd like to single out Pastor Michael Morris, Reverend Alvin Nicholson and Reverend Don Meredith for their leadership and for bringing us all together today, in this place, to celebrate.

We celebrate our province, this city and, especially, this community of faith, which has come together at an especially challenging time -- to not only address the problem of guns and gangs but to go further, to the root of the problem, to prevent violence.

And I am tremendously thankful and honoured to join with you.

I think the powerful lessons we learn in life are not learned in school or through books. They are learned at home.

I grew up in a big family. We were ten kids at home. We would walk to Church on Sundays, not because we were into fitness, but because we couldn't fit into the car. When I was 16, I had a two-year-old sister and a three-year-old brother and lots in between. And my mother would regularly tell me, "You've got to slow down -- you can see that the little ones can't keep up with you." And as a typical 16-year-old, I would say, "Why should I? I'm bigger, I'm stronger and I'm faster. Why should I have to wait up for them?"

And my mom said, "Because we're a family. And in a family, we stick together." In a family we support one another. We look out for one another. We care for one another. In a family, if one of us meets with success, that's a cause for celebration by the rest of us. But in a family, if one of us is in trouble, then we're all in trouble and we all have a responsibility to help out.

My family today is no longer a family of 12. It's twelve and a half million. Some of the family are having some trouble, so we're going to come together to help the members of our family.

I think the Bible offers some pretty good advice on this score. One of the most often quoted parts of the Bible is 1 Corinthians: 13, where we read these words: "So faith, hope, love abide ... these three ... but the greatest of these is love."

It seems to me that these are the three things that have brought us together today. Faith, hope and love.

Let's begin with faith.

We're here, you and I, not only because this is a community of faith but because we have faith in our community ... faith that there is no problem so big that it cannot be solved if we come together, work together and dream, together.

A few weeks ago, I got a letter from Reverend Nicholson asking our government to support an exciting new program called "Down with Guns." And that strategy has four goals: to strengthen families, focus on education, create employment options and opportunity, and encourage our youth to know their civic rights and responsibilities.

Four volunteer action committees will make sure these goals are met. And parents, educators, artists, law enforcement officials and many other expert volunteers will be putting their shoulders to the wheel, and doing their part to make a difference.

And I, and my government, have faith that they will make a difference. So we are providing \$3 million to support this new program. You've stepped up and said, "We can't leave the work to someone else. We have a role to play too."

So we're stepping up as well. We have faith in your sincere desire and ability to do what is right to strengthen your families. And we have faith in our ability, you and I, to work together for the good of our community.

We will not allow any person, any group, any event or any series of events, to rob us of our determination, our shared responsibility to build a good life for our children.

In this, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, we are all leaders. And leaders, you should understand, never despair. Leaders are not allowed to despair because too many others are counting on us.

Leaders bring hope and that's what I want to talk about next. Hope. Hope for our kids. Hope for our families. Hope for our communities. Hope that our lives can be better.

I'm not talking about weak hope -- the kind that minimizes the challenges before us. I'm talking about a firm hope -- the kind that comes from the strength that we draw from each other when we work together.

Working together in January, we announced a \$51-million enforcement strategy to get guns and gangs off our streets. Working together in February, we launched our Youth Opportunities Strategy -- a fund that I say with confidence will grow to \$45 million as chaired by coach Pinball Clemons -- that's a fund to invest in our youth and prevent crime. Also in February, Minister Chambers announced a new investment of \$28.5 million in a youth opportunity strategy to help young people reach their full potential through the support of new youth outreach workers, better summer jobs and more help at school. And today, we've taken another important step with our new "Down with Guns" program. Working together, we're bringing hope to our community.

There is one particular definition of hope I am especially fond of. There's a fellow by the name of Wordsworth, one of the romantic poets, who wrote almost 200 years ago. He defined hope as the "paramount duty that Heaven lays for its own honour on man's suffering heart." I love that definition of hope because he speaks of hope as a duty, as an obligation, as our shared responsibility. Together, we will bring hope to our community.

Now I've talked about our faith in each other to get the job done and our duty to bring hope. Now comes the most important one, love.

Someone once said that in every family there are wounds to heal, in every community there is work to be done and in every heart there is the power to do it. And that power, of course, is love. Now, it might seem strange to hear someone like me talking about love.

Let's face it, when was the last time you heard the words "love" and "government" in the same sentence? I accept that. But if you and I are not motivated by love -- love for our city, love for our neighbour, love for our kids, love for our families -- then we might as well all pack up and go home right now.

Because, right now, there are kids out there who need that from us more than anything. They need to know that you and I care. They need to know that we actually believe in them and in what they can be. They need us to be there with them, standing up for them when they need us -- and yes, standing up to them when they need that too.

They need to know our love is tough -- tough in the sense that it is durable, that it is strong. They need to know that we're not going to give up on them, that we're not going to give our streets and communities over to fear and hatred. And our youth need to see, in everything we do, that in this world, the bravest people are not the ones with guns in their hands but with love in their hearts.

Now of course there will be skeptics, the cynics who've allowed the corrosive effects of life to rob them of their idealism, to rob them of their sense of the possible. But you and I will not fall prey to that. We have faith in our ability to get the job done. We understand that it is our duty to bring hope to those who are counting on us. And we have confidence that love is the most powerful weapon of all.

I know and you know that working together in faith, in hope and in love there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

Thank you very much.