

## **News Release**

### **Summer Program Returns For Toronto Kids**

#### **McGuinty Government Expands Successful Learning and Recreation Program**

April 4, 2008

This summer, the Ontario government will help young people in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa enjoy basketball clinics, art classes and leadership training at area schools.

The province will help not-for-profit groups deliver these summer activities to keep young people safe and active. This program, called Focus on Youth, is especially important for low-income families who have limited access to learning and recreation opportunities when school ends for the year.

School space will be offered free of charge to community groups who successfully apply. Local school boards will post details on how to apply in the coming weeks.

Last year, the government launched the program in over 100 Toronto schools. About 11,000 young people had access to the program. Some 380 youth were hired, some in leadership positions with community groups.

This year, Ontario is expanding the program to Hamilton and Ottawa and increasing funding for the program by 50 per cent to \$6 million. Toronto will receive \$4 million, Ottawa \$1.23 million and Hamilton \$765,000.

#### **Quotes**

"This program allows for learning to extend beyond the classroom and the regular school year - we are providing opportunities to engage students year-round," said Education Minister Kathleen Wynne.

"Programs like this are especially important in communities like Malvern where families may have limited access to learning and recreational activities during the summer," said Bas Balkissoon, MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River.

"Opening our schools to community programs is a significant part of the effort to set our youth on pathways to success. United Way is proud to be part of an innovative program that will mean the world to youth in our city. Thanks to Focus On Youth, thousands of young people in

neighbourhoods across Toronto will again be able to take part in recreational, leadership, and employment opportunities they would not otherwise have," said United Way President Frances Lankin.

### **Quick Facts**

Studies show that children who spend 20 to 35 hours a week in activities like sports, music and art are significantly more likely to succeed in school.

On average, Canadian children aged 10 to 16 spent six hours a day in front of their TV, playing video games and/or using the computer

Toronto has 644 elementary schools and 159 secondary schools, Ottawa has 195 elementary schools and 45 high schools. Hamilton has 152 elementary schools and 27 high schools.

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### **Backgrounder:**

#### **What is Focus on Youth?**

Focus on Youth is a partnership between the Ontario government, school boards and local community agencies. It provides summer programming for students in urban, high-needs neighbourhoods.

School boards will receive funding, identify key neighbourhoods and find appropriate summer programs to run in schools. Each school board will tailor programs based on the needs of local communities.

Focus on Youth builds on the province's Community Use of Schools program. This program provides free school space to community groups after hours during the school year.

#### **How much is the government investing?**

The government invested \$4 million in 2007.

In 2008, Toronto will get \$4 million again. Ottawa will get \$1.23 million and Hamilton \$765,000.

Funding is expected to grow to \$10 million annually by 2011-12, with more cities added in the future.

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