

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT HELPING YOUTH GAIN VALUABLE JOB SKILLS *Summer Jobs Program Part of Overall Strategy To Provide Opportunities for Youth*

TORONTO — Nine hundred youth from at-risk communities in Toronto are getting jobs this summer as part of the McGuinty government's Youth Opportunities Strategy, Minister of Children and Youth Services Mary Anne Chambers announced today.

“Youth from several Toronto communities have told us they need summer jobs but employers don't typically choose them,” said Chambers. “These youth are talented and deserve the opportunity to achieve their potential. That's why we're working with partners in the community to make sure youth have the opportunity to put their talent to use with summer jobs.”

The Summer Jobs for Youth Program is one component of the government's new Youth Opportunities Strategy, a broad plan to help young people faced with significant challenges achieve individual success and promote stronger communities. This summer, the strategy is being implemented primarily in Toronto communities identified by the United Way of Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto as being under-served and in greatest need. Next year, the strategy will be expanded to include additional communities across the province, including Windsor, Ottawa, London, Hamilton and Thunder Bay.

“The Summer Jobs for Youth Program enables young people from disadvantaged circumstances, regardless of previous experience, to gain real work experience, obtain a job reference for future employment and contribute to Goodwill's productivity,” said Dr. Ken Connelly, President and CEO of Goodwill Toronto. “As a result, this important initiative also enables Goodwill to further our mission of providing work opportunities and skills development to individuals who face barriers to employment.”

Minister Chambers also announced the launch of YouthConnect.ca, a youth-oriented website that profiles individual success stories, programs and services and provides important information on education, health, work, coming of age and recreation. The design and content of the new website was developed based on input and feedback from youth.

The Ontario government is investing \$28.5 million in the first three years of this strategy. In its first year this includes:

- Establishing an annual Summer Jobs for Youth Program, coordinated through Scarborough-based Tropicana Community Services, for 800 youth from at-risk communities in Toronto. The program includes pre-employment readiness, employment placements and post-employment supports in a variety of fields including business, recreation and youth leadership

- Partnering with the Toronto Police Service for the new Youth in Policing initiative to create summer jobs for up to 100 youth
- Hiring 39 youth outreach workers who will build relationships with youth, provide advice and connect them to appropriate services.

“The Summer Jobs for Youth Program is a real success story,” said Sharon Shelton, Executive Director of Tropicana Community Services. “Over 250 employers are providing youth who might otherwise be overlooked for summer job placements with the opportunity to learn valuable job readiness skills and gain work experience. In addition, this program helps young people build self-confidence and take pride in making a positive contribution to their communities.”

This investment is one of the many steps the McGuinty government has taken to create more opportunities for young people in Ontario. The government has:

- Committed \$52 million this year to help 56,000 young people find work or start their own business as part of the Ontario Summer Jobs program
- Increased the number of registered new apprentices to 26,000 annually in 2007-08 and introduced the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit to make it easier for employers to hire and train new apprentices
- Established the Student Access Guarantee to ensure approximately 200,000 students from lower- and middle-income families have access to the resources they need for their college or university tuition, books and mandatory fees
- Created the \$20-million Community Use of Schools program to increase the use of schools by not-for-profit groups at reduced rates
- Invested \$3.9 million to add 12 new youth intervention centres to provide youth in conflict with the law with programs to help them re-integrate into their communities
- Allocated \$74.6 million as part of a three-year expansion plan for 22 new Community Health Centres and 17 Satellite Community Health Centres by 2007-08
- Launched the African Canadian Youth Justice Program in partnership with the African Canadian Legal Clinic, to help youth in conflict with the law achieve better outcomes through community-based, culturally-sensitive services and referrals
- Established the Youth Challenge Fund which will provide up to \$45 million for community-led programs targeted at young people in at-risk Toronto neighbourhoods
- Funded the “Down With Guns” program, a community-designed initiative led by the Toronto Community Foundation to encourage youth to lead lives free of violence.

“Young people are telling us that they need more opportunities to help them overcome the significant challenges they face in trying to achieve success,” said Chambers. “Our young people need and deserve our support. We will continue to do all that we can to help them pursue their dreams. In doing so, we can help to ensure brighter futures for our youth, their communities and our province.”

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