



September 21, 2007

Mr. Charles de Kerckhove  
Protect Kids Advocacy Campaign  
[charles@protect-kids.org](mailto:charles@protect-kids.org)

Dear Mr. de Kerckhove:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the issues outlined in the Protect Kids Advocacy Campaign Report Card. I commend you and your organization on your hard work and dedication to the protection of children at risk, and I am pleased to respond on behalf of Ontario Liberals to you and your organization about the report card results. In addition to this letter, I have attached a detailed response.

The exploitation of children — by whatever means — is appalling and unconscionable. That is why Ontario Liberals are firmly committed to ensuring that police have the tools and resources they need to fight child exploitation.

We are working hard to protect our kids. We launched a multi-faceted \$5-million provincial strategy to fight Internet crimes against children, such as Internet stalking. We provided funding for 60 new municipal officers dedicated to fighting Internet child sexual exploitation. We also provided \$105,000 to Peel Regional Police to expand the parameters of the Peel Police Internet Child Exploitation Unit.

We have also increased the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) child pornography section funding by \$1 million — 70 per cent — to increase the number of detectives, acquire technology and specialized training, and enhance the unit's website with prevention tools and information for parents.

We have seen notable progress — the OPP laid child pornography charges against 58 people in 2006, and 40 people to date in 2007. The OPP launched over 350 investigations into child pornography in 2006, and over 230 to date this year.

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Enforcement is only one part of the solution, of course. That is why, as you know, Ontario Liberals introduced the CYBERCOPS program.

We have also provided more than \$1 million in grants to municipal police services, designed to prevent crimes against children. Most notably, \$700,000 was ear-marked for more officers to conduct repeat visits to offenders at risk of re-offending, to help to improve the ability of the Toronto Police Services Board to keep close track of sex offenders. Also, \$300,000 was given to the York Regional Police Services Board to accelerate the process of checking fingerprints of community volunteers who work with children and other vulnerable people.

We continue to maintain a strong, police-accessible Ontario Sex Offender Registry, which is both tougher and more accessible than the newer federal registry. We are proud of our registry's 94 per cent compliance rate, and believe it is an essential tool in our fight to protect Ontario's children from harm.

On the prevention side, we have also invested \$21 million over five years in protecting Ontarians from high-risk offenders by setting up eight regional teams of prosecutors and specialists across the province. We also provided the OPP with resources to fund its Repeat Offender Monitoring Strategy, which allows it to keep close tabs on high-risk offenders.

Ontario Liberals continue to call on the federal government for stronger laws to manage these high-risk offenders. In particular, we want the federal government to pass laws giving courts greater powers to make recognizance orders, and new provisions to allow us to seek dangerous offender status immediately after a recognizance violation, without having to wait for another assault to occur.

Mr. de Kerckhove, thank you again for submitting the Protect Kids Advocacy Campaign Report Card to me.

I am always grateful for your suggestions and input. I am heartened by the progress we have made on behalf of Ontario children by working with our partners together. But you know — and I know — there is more to do. With the support of organizations like Protect Kids, we hope to have the opportunity to

continue to move forward together with police and our other justice sector partners over the course of our next mandate.

Please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty  
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party  
Premier

## **APPENDIX**

### **DETAILED RESPONSE TO PROTECT KIDS ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN REPORT CARD**

#### **Prevention**

Thank you for acknowledging Ontario Liberals' success with the CYBERCOPS program. We are proud of this program, and hope it will prevent many tragedies.

With respect to provincial standards, while one size will not fit all, we are eager to ensure that best practices are being shared and applied across the province: our Safe Schools Action Team has been looking into this very issue.

On the question of funding for prevention, we would always like to do more. More than \$1 million in grants was ear-marked for prevention — most notably \$700,000 for more officers and repeat visits to offenders who pose a risk to re-offend — to help improve the ability of the Toronto Police Services Board to keep close track of sex offenders. Also, \$300,000 was given to the York Regional Police Services Board to accelerate the process of checking fingerprints of community volunteers who work with children and other vulnerable people.

#### **Ending Child Pornography**

Thank you for recognizing the success of our multi-faceted \$5-million provincial strategy to fight Internet crimes against children, such as Internet stalking. While there is always more to do, we believe Ontario is fast becoming a world leader in combatting these appalling and unconscionable crimes.

#### **Legal System Support for Kids**

Thank you for your compliment on our investment in child-friendly courtrooms. Children are definitely a priority for Ontario Liberals. We are working with the judiciary and our justice partners to move child protection cases through the system as quickly and efficiently as possible.

We have reformed the legislation that governs Children's Aid Societies so that more cases can be resolved through Alternative Dispute Resolution. This model is more expeditious and results in better outcomes for kids.

We have also appointed six new judges to the Ontario Court of Justice to hear family and child protection cases and we continue to call on the federal government to expand the size of the Family Court of the Superior Court of Justice.

We have also: rolled out a new case tracking system in courts across the province to track timelines and provide improved data; increased the use of video conferencing to help child protection cases in the north move more quickly and easily; and launched a pilot project in the north to allow for the filing of documents by fax. All of these initiatives are intended to ensure that child protection cases are handled in a timely manner. We continue to work with the Family Courts Steering Committee to examine best practices, train lawyers on all sides, and make better and more efficient use of assessments.

### **Coercing Feds for Zero-Tolerance Sentencing**

We are grateful for your suggestions on how to further our lobbying efforts in engaging the federal government to deal with these crimes. These are valuable and useful suggestions that we will consider.

### **Access to Counselling**

Before Ontario Liberals took office, children's mental health agencies had not received a base increase in 12 years. We have provided two base increases for the sector, including a 5 per cent base increase for all children's mental health agencies this year.

We are committed in our second mandate to making continued progress in improving access to counselling.

### **Accountability to Law Enforcement Concerns**

Thank you for acknowledging our \$21.5-million high-risk offenders investment. This is an important measure in protecting children from predators.

We share a number of your concerns as to the deficiencies in the federal sex offender registry. In particular, we agree that the registry needs to be accessible to police at all times.

In many ways, Ontario's registry is tougher than the federal registry, with severe penalties for non-registration, and a 94 per cent compliance rate.

### **Access to Judicial Documentation**

We want to get the balance right between protecting the privacy of victims and making sure the public is adequately informed.

Ontario's courts have a history of being cautious about releasing information that might identify victims of sexual crimes. We have made a great deal of progress on this during the course of our mandate. We established the Justice and the Media Panel to examine issues of access, and have now formed a permanent Justice Media Liaison Committee. We are working hard to implement the recommendations of the panel and to strike the right balance between privacy and access.

### **Structural Changes**

We have just been through a comprehensive review and amendment of the Human Rights Code, and do not propose to reopen this legislation in the near future. However, during a second mandate, Ontario Liberals would gladly study a proposal to change or remove the exclusion. In conducting such a review, we would want to ensure that any change to the Code does not accidentally impact on legitimate instances where children are subjected to differential treatment on the basis of age — such as by retailers who do not wish to sell or rent certain goods to them.