

**Ministry of Community Safety
and Correctional Services**

**Ministère de la Sécurité communautaire
et des Services correctionnels**



Office of the Minister

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DEC 12 2005

Ms. Valerie Smith
PO Box 90598
Markham Eglinton Post Office
Toronto ON M1J 3N7

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for your letter expressing concerns about the production and distribution of films and video games that advocate gun violence and criminal acts. I am pleased to respond and apologize for the delay.

I share your concerns about the proliferation of such offensive material. The Legislative Assembly of Ontario has recently passed the *Film Classification Act, 2004* (FCA). This act allows the Ontario Film Review Board to adopt video game classifications provided by the industry-based Entertainment Software Rating Board. This act also harmonizes Ontario's classification standards with other provinces to ensure that consumers are provided with consistent information. Since the Ministry of Government Services is responsible for the administration of the FCA, I have forwarded a copy of your correspondence to the Honourable Gerry Phillips, Minister of Government Services, for his consideration.

As you indicate in your letter, the City of Toronto is responsible for working with those who wish to produce films in Toronto. Therefore, you may wish to forward your concerns directly to His Worship David Miller, Mayor, City of Toronto, 100 Queen Street West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2, telephone 416-397-2489, fax 416-696-3687, e-mail: mayor_miller@toronto.ca.

I also appreciate your concerns about how such violent films and video games may contribute to gang activity and gun violence in Toronto. Our government is committed to community safety and putting an end to gun violence. We have already taken significant action to reduce gun crimes, prosecute those responsible and stop the spread of illegal guns in this province.

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As you may know, on November 25, 2005, I announced the allocations of new police officers under the Safer Communities – 1,000 Officers Partnership program. Under this cost-sharing program, the government is delivering on its promise to support community policing, by designating 500 officers for deployment to meet community priorities, including street patrols, working with schools and enhanced traffic enforcement. The program will also build safer communities by designating 500 officers to focus on the six priority areas that are of greatest concern to Ontario residents: guns and gangs, youth crime, organized crime and marijuana grow ops, domestic violence, dangerous offenders, and protecting children from Internet luring and child pornography. I am confident that this program will help communities be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime by putting more police resources where they are needed.

This initiative is a clear illustration of our commitment to making Ontario communities safer and stronger. We are continuing to fund the previous government's 1,000 officers program as well as our 1,000 officers program in perpetuity. This means that we are providing more than \$68 million in funding for over 2,000 officers each year.

In addition, on September 1, 2005, the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General, announced a strengthened partnership with the Toronto Police Service, along with four new initiatives, to help build on the province's plan to combat gun violence. The four initiatives include:

- developing "blitz" inspections on gun businesses to ensure gun storage and safe keeping standards are being met;
- creating a gun amnesty to get more illegal guns off the streets;
- improving Ontario's witness protection program to encourage the public to come forward with information; and,
- implementing new and innovative ways for Crown prosecutors to bring community impact evidence before the courts in seeking tougher sentences for crimes involving firearms.

Another example of our commitment to combat guns and gangs is the creation of an elite, special anti-gun and gang task force, comprising experienced police officers and expert prosecutors, to target gang activity and the trafficking of handguns on Toronto streets. This task force was recently expanded by the Attorney General to include an additional 32 Crown prosecutors and 26 experienced police officers.

My ministry has also provided funding to the Toronto Police Service to support the Public Education and Crime Eradication (PEACE) initiative. PEACE is assisting the Toronto Police Service in addressing youth violence and gun use in the Greater Toronto Area by providing anti-gun and anti-gang messages directly to youth in schools.

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Other strategies to combat gun violence include supporting City of Toronto Mayor David Miller's Community Safety Panel Jobs for Youth Program. Over the past two summers, the Ontario government has provided \$1 million in funding for the program. This funding initially targeted disadvantaged youth in the Malvern, Jane/Finch and Jamestown areas, and was expanded to include Galloway in Scarborough East in 2005.

In addition, the federal government has recently committed to increasing mandatory minimum sentences for trafficking guns and to introduce two new offences, championed by the Ontario government, to target gun theft, which leads to gun crime. We are also very pleased with \$50 million in new federal funding, announced by the Prime Minister, to support community-based prevention and intervention projects that prevent youth from becoming involved in guns and gangs. This federal commitment echoes our determination to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

Please be assured that our government will continue to take a leadership role in reducing gun violence. We are working closely with the police and all levels of government to ensure our communities are safe and provide a quality of life that is second to none.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Monte Kwinter', written in a cursive style.

Monte Kwinter
Minister

c: The Honourable Gerry Phillips
Minister of Government Services

The Honourable Michael Bryant
Attorney General

Mr. Julian Fantino
Commissioner of Emergency Management