

**Statement by the
Honourable Sandra Pupatello
Minister of Community and Social Services**

Results for Ontario Families at the Family Responsibility Office

Toronto, Ontario, November 29, 2005

(Check Against Delivery)

Thank you Mister Speaker.

I'm pleased to tell the House about the great work that's happening at the Family Responsibility Office (FRO).

Shortly after our government took office, I took a drive up to the FRO.

After years of being an MPP and hearing from my constituents about the frustration they endured trying to get support payments, I wanted to see for myself just what kind of system we were dealing with.

And what I saw really took me by surprise.

The systems there were downright antiquated compared to what we see in most businesses today.

I remember in particular, that it was such a paper-based system that the staff actually wore white gloves to protect their hands from all the paper cuts from managing and handling and re-handling of paper.

To this day, I have a pair of those white gloves in my desk drawer to remind me of how things used to be.

We needed to make changes and do it quickly.

And in February 2004 we announced several initiatives aimed at improving services at the FRO to help families get the support they are entitled to.

Less than two years later, I am here to tell everyone in this House that we are seeing some amazing results from those initiatives.

Last week I had another opportunity to visit the FRO and talk to the people who are making such a difference for FRO clients.

For example, the staff in the Customer Service Unit – which is the area where we first undertook to improve customer service at the FRO.

Each week since February 2004, this unit has diverted up to 3,500 calls from enforcement agents so that these agents can focus on enforcement instead of routine questions.

Taking the less complex calls away from the enforcement staff has shown impressive results:

- The FRO has handled over 600,000 calls from April 2004 to March 2005, more than a 70% increase from the same period two years earlier;
- Average call centre wait times have decreased almost 40%; and,
- There has been a 75% increase in the number of callers that are able to get through on their first attempt.

Customer service has also been improved thanks to more than 180,000 new Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) that have been issued to clients to help them access their case information through the automated phone system 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

An Arrears File Review project was launched in November 2004 with an ambitious goal – cleaning up almost 39,000 cases representing \$639 million in arrears.

Since that time:

- 23,500 of these cases have been reviewed;
- \$13 million has been collected on cases where no money was ever received prior to the arrears file review;
- and there has been a \$41 million reduction in arrears.

Then my personal favourite: the Trace and Locate initiative – or as I like to call it, CSI Downsvew.

FRO's ability to track down defaulting payors has significantly improved thanks to this team's success in using every available resource to track down obsolete addresses and phone numbers.

Trace and Locate exceeded everyone's expectations, handling more than 2,500 pieces of mail each month and had a search success rate of over 55%.

And how about the Credit Bureau Initiative?

Who would've thought that simply letting people know they were going to be reported to the credit bureau would result in over \$157 million collected?

The results from all these successes are easy to see.

- Overall, FRO's collections are up 3% in 2004/05 over the previous year, and the compliance rate – those are cases that are in good standing – is at 68%.

The great work that's happening at FRO has been recognized for excellence in customer service and client satisfaction, receiving a bronze award at this year's Public Sector Quality Fair.

And we continue to build on the successes I have already told you about.

We are well on the way to moving to a brand new, proactive case management approach at the FRO, and we're bringing in the technology to support it.

This is technology that will finally bring FRO into the modern era – no more white gloves or pre-industrial revolution technology!

And thanks to the support of this House, our new legislation is going to help us strengthen the FRO's enforcement's powers, make further improvements so that the FRO works as efficiently as possible, and help make the system fairer for the many parents who do honour their obligations and responsibilities to their families.

With the hard work of the staff at FRO and leadership of this government, I'm confident that more parents will live up to their family responsibilities – and that will mean stronger, healthier families across Ontario.

Thank you.