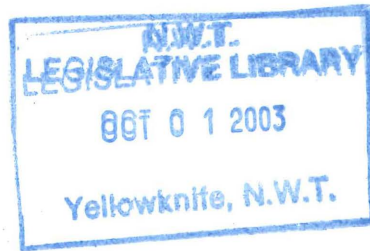




News Release



03-088



Federal/NWT Ministers of Justice Meet in YK

YELLOWKNIFE (September 26) -- Minister of Justice Roger Allen met recently with federal Justice Minister Martin Cauchon in Yellowknife. The Ministers discussed a number of issues facing the justice system in the Northwest Territories and Canada.

“Minister Cauchon provided assurances that Justice Canada officials recognize the unique challenges facing the administration of justice in the North - including providing legal aid services and issues related to prosecuting the possession of an unregistered firearm,” Mr. Allen said.

Both Ministers believe the focus should be on compliance with the firearms legislation.

Justice Canada prosecutors will continue, in accordance with existing prosecution policy, to consider on a case by case basis, whether it is in the public interest to prosecute the offence of possession of an unregistered firearm.

If a charge is laid for possession of an unregistered firearm, Ministers Cauchon and Allen agree that current prosecution policy allowed federal prosecutors to consider, in appropriate cases, community-based alternatives like diversion to justice committees.

The Ministers also discussed recent funding increases for legal aid.

“Minister Cauchon has shown leadership in securing new funding in the last Federal budget to address the challenges facing legal aid in the North,” Mr. Allen said. “The Minister recognizes that our high crime rate, the demands for family law services and the need to serve remote communities place additional pressures on our legal aid system,” he said.

For more information contact: **Glen Rutland**
 Policy Advisor, Communications
 Justice
 Tel: (867) 920-3130