



THE Watchdog

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NEW INVESTIGATION PROBES CONCERNS ABOUT MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

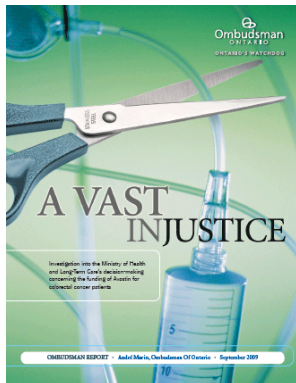
The Ombudsman's investigation into non-emergency medical transportation services (MTSs), announced January 11, is now in full swing. Investigators with the Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT) have already conducted more than 50 interviews with people who have used these services and their families, people involved in the medical transfer industry, and medical personnel. More than two dozen new complaints about MTSs – private companies that transport thousands of non-emergency patients from hospital to home, or to medical appointments – have been received since the investigation was announced.

Ombudsman André Marin said in a recent interview that several complaints have come from "whistleblowers" within the industry, and some have raised questions about whether it should be regulated, as it is in other provinces. "We are hearing some very serious allegations from people who have actually worked in these vehicles and from patients, and we've had good co-operation from some of the companies," Mr. Marin said.

The investigation is looking into concerns about patient safety, lack of infection control and poor training in MTSs and whether the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has adequate measures in place to protect the public. The investigation is expected to be completed by late March.

Anyone who has had experience with MTSs is asked to call 1-800-263-1830 or fill out an online complaint form on our site.

LIFTING OF AVASTIN CAP HELPS HUNDREDS OF PATIENTS



Since the Ombudsman's 2009 investigation into the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's cap on funding the colorectal cancer drug Avastin, some 400 patients have had their access to the life-prolonging drug extended, the Ministry noted in its latest update to the Ombudsman in January. In his September 2009 report, *A Vast Injustice*, the Ombudsman recommended the Ministry end the "arbitrary" cutoff of funding for patients who were still doing well on the drug after 16 cycles of treatment. The Ministry did so in December 2009, agreeing to cover the cost of the drug to 24 cycles and beyond for patients whose disease has not progressed.

In an update to the Ombudsman on January 31, the Ministry reported: "As of October 31, 2010, the average duration of treatment has increased slightly to 10.9 cycles and the median duration is 10 cycles.

Approximately 400 patients have received more than 16 cycles of treatment with Avastin since the change in funding criteria. This represents about 18% of all patients who have received Avastin for this indication."

UPDATE ON OVERSIGHT

The Ombudsman is able to receive public complaints regarding the Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society in Stratford and Hôtel-Dieu Grace hospital in Windsor, following the province's appointment of supervisors at both facilities.

While the Ombudsman normally does not have jurisdiction over areas of the MUSH sector (Municipalities, Universities, School Boards, Hospitals, long-term care facilities, children's aid societies, and police), that changes once the province takes direct control.

Likewise, as of January 29, now that the province ended its two-year supervision of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the board no longer falls within the Ombudsman's authority.

LONG-TERM CARE FINDINGS RELEASED, MONITORING CONTINUES

In December, the Ombudsman released the results of his investigation into the monitoring of long-term care homes. The investigation found delays, inconsistencies and a lack of transparency on the part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The extensive investigation, conducted by the Special Ombudsman Response Team, was launched in July 2008 after the Ombudsman received more than 100 complaints. An additional 450 complaints were received after the investigation was announced.

During and after the investigation, significant organizational transition occurred in the Ministry with respect to the monitoring system. Among other

HOW TO COMPLAIN

The Ombudsman's Office oversees and investigates close to 500 provincial ministries, agencies, tribunals, and Crown corporations.

[File a complaint online](#)

Phone: 1-800-263-1830, Fax: 416-586-3485 / TTY 1-866-411-4211

Email: info@ombudsman.on.ca

Write: Ombudsman Ontario, Bell Trinity Square, 483 Bay St., 10th Floor, South Tower, Toronto, ON M5G 2C9.



MATTAWA FOUND IN VIOLATION OF OPEN-MEETING LAW

An investigation by the Ombudsman's Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team (OMLET) has determined that the Town of Mattawa's Ad Hoc Heritage Committee held a series of improperly closed meetings in 2009 and 2010, in violation of the open meeting provisions of the Municipal Act.

In his December 2010 report on the investigation, Ombudsman André Marin called on the town to amend its procedure by-law and better inform the public about closed meetings. Anyone who is concerned that a municipal meeting might have been improperly closed to the public can complain to the Ombudsman, unless the municipality has appointed

things, it opted to adopt entirely new "quality indicator" methodology in early 2009, while regulations under the new Long Term Care Homes Act, 2007 were being developed. The Act and regulations did not come into effect until July 1, 2010, and the Ministry's reform process is ongoing.

The Ministry co-operated fully with the investigation and has incorporated the Ombudsman's suggestions into its reform plan. It has agreed to report back to the Ombudsman regularly on its progress in fixing the problems he raised. The Special Ombudsman Response Team is closely monitoring these changes and the Ombudsman may still reopen the investigation and release a report if he feels it is warranted.

Ombudsman in the News:

- [Lives in nursing homes improving: Minister](#) (Toronto Star)
- [Concerns about long-term care in Ontario continue](#) (CTV Southwestern Ontario series)

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario | Bureau de l'Ombudsman de l'Ontario
1-800-263-1830 - Complaints Line | Ligne des plaintes | 1-866-411-4211 - TTY | ATS

its own closed meeting investigator.

[Read the full report.](#)

[More info on open municipal meetings](#)

OMBUDSMAN IN THE COMMUNITY

The Ombudsman's Office will be represented at the annual Government and Community Services Fair on **February 26th, 11 am – 3:30 pm**, at Cloverdale Mall, 250 The East Mall. Come out and say hello to our staff as well as get your questions answered on what our office does and how to file a complaint.

www.ombudsman.on.ca

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