



THE Watchdog

VOLUME 16, DECEMBER 2011 [Subscribe to our e-newsletter](#) [Unsubscribe](#)
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Government failing to support police watchdog, uphold law: Ombudsman



Rather than ensuring the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is able to fulfill its difficult role as Canada's only fully independent civilian police oversight body, the Ministry of the Attorney General has sought to avoid controversy, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin concludes in his report, [Oversight Undermined](#).

In his latest report, released Dec. 14, Mr. Marin renewed his call for effective legislation to support the province's police watchdog, after his latest investigation found the responsible ministry has actively undermined it.

Among other things, the Ombudsman found Ministry officials "systematically" discouraged the SIU Director from speaking out about problems with police not meeting their duty to co-operate with the SIU in cases where they are involved in the serious injury or death of civilians. They dismissed his concerns about lawyers vetting the notes of officers involved in such cases – a practice the Ontario Court

of Appeal recently ruled against. And they suppressed an SIU annual report that raised similar concerns, calling it "provocative" and not "useful."

"Unfortunately, it is the citizens of Ontario who are the losers in this equation," Mr. Marin says in the report. "The Ministry's stance continues to frustrate the promise of strong and independent civilian police oversight and serves to further undermine public confidence in policing."

This is Mr. Marin's second investigation involving the SIU. In his 2008 report [Oversight Unseen](#), he found the SIU was under-resourced, suffered from a perceived pro-police bias, and its investigations lacked rigour and transparency. He recommended it hire more investigators who were not ex-police, respond more forcefully to non-co-operative police forces and make more information about its investigations public. He also said the province should enact legislation dealing specifically with the SIU's mandate and investigative authority.

Read more about *Oversight Undermined* on our website, where you'll find the [full report](#), including the Ombudsman's recommendations, as well as the [press release](#) and [additional background details](#). You can also [watch the video](#) from the December 14 press conference.



Latest 'Sharpening Your Teeth' training in Toronto and Quebec City

The fifth annual edition of 'Sharpening Your Teeth', the Ombudsman's investigative training course for administrative watchdogs, was held November 28-30 in Toronto, with more than 70 attendees, including representatives from across Canada, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Curaçao, Antigua and Barbuda and the Cayman Islands – as well as several senior Ontario government employees.



arrange another session for staff at her Montreal offices in 2012.

Shelly Jamieson, Secretary of the Ontario Cabinet, and Ombudsman André Marin

"Speaking with those at the Ontario Ombudsman's office was enlightening. Your office is a great example of an office that functions well together through mutual collaboration and co-operation."

-Participant, SYT 2011

This year's special guest speaker was Ms. Shelly Jamieson, Secretary of the Ontario Cabinet and head of the province's public service. "I consider the Ombudsman to be one of among my most valued allies," [she told participants](#). "The Ombudsman's work leads to real, systemic change – change that makes a real difference for the people of Ontario."

Ombudsman André Marin and his team also presented "Sharpening Your Teeth" in French for the first time November 13-15. The training was done in Quebec City at the invitation of the Quebec Ombudsman/Protectrice du citoyen, Mme. Raymonde Saint-Germain.

The two-day course, known as "Aiguisez-vous les dents" in French, was such a success with the 45 participants at the Protectrice's office in Quebec City that plans are in the works to

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

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Thanks for your comments, conversation, and feedback!

Please continue to reach out to us on social media, or drop us a line at thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.

Internal Ombudsman Office wiki

Last week, the Ombudsman's office launched POWR (Personal Ombudsman Web Resource). It's an internal wiki for Ombudsman staff that will make it easier for them to share information between themselves and send links and information to complainants.

As the Ombudsman noted on [Twitter](#):



Ont_Ombudsman Ontario Ombudsman

We'll be able to share public links and info directly w complainants cutting down on [#snailmail](#). [#wiki](#)

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POWR was created to give staff a fast, efficient way to collect and share online information. The new system allows staff to easily create, edit, and search online entries, which include anything from sample letters to helpful web bookmarks to important contacts at government organizations. This way, Ombudsman staff will always be able to share the most up-to-date information with complainants, and collaborate with each other to produce valuable internal resources.

Here's a glimpse of POWR:

Personal Ombudsman Web Resource (POWR)

ONTARIO'S WATCHDOG

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