



THE WATCHDOG

Newsletter

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MUCH ADO ABOUT MUNICIPAL MATTERS

It's been a busy month for the Ombudsman's Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team (OMLET), which is devoted to upholding Ontario's municipal open meeting law, also known as the Sunshine Law.

The Ombudsman released seven OMLET reports this month, three of which found municipalities were not following the rules.

In almost all of those reports, Ombudsman André Marin recommended, as he often does, that closed meetings be audio- or video-recorded to provide a clear, accessible record for investigators to review, and to ensure that officials do not stray from the legal requirements behind closed doors.

To record, or not to record? There is no question

Two new Hamilton city councillors are taking the Ombudsman's recommendations seriously.

In his [recent report](#), he did not find the city in contravention of the Municipal Act, but he did suggest that all closed meetings be recorded. Hamilton rejected the practice in 2013, but according to news reports, councillors Doug Conley and Matthew Green have put the idea back on the table.

[Read the report](#)

[DRESCHER: New councillors heed watchdog's bark \(The Hamilton Spectator\)](#)

APRIL 2015

The Ombudsman investigates public complaints about Ontario government agencies. His office oversees more than 500 provincial ministries, agencies, tribunals, boards, commissions and Crown corporations.

[FILE A COMPLAINT ONLINE](#)

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OVERSIGHT IS IN OUR SIGHTS



Not at the table

The Ombudsman also found the Village of Casselman violating the open meeting requirements for the second time since last fall's election.

In March, an OMLET investigation determined that council [violated the Sunshine Law in November 2014](#).

The Ombudsman's [latest report](#) found Mayor Conrad Lamadeleine and three councillors met illegally at a restaurant with local contractors and engineers this past January.

As the Ombudsman noted, the discussion that took place during the lunch gathering could easily have taken place during a public council meeting, with proper advance notice given to the public.

The mayor has continued to state publicly that there was nothing wrong with the meeting.

[Read the report](#)

[The mayor and former mayor of Casselman argue over illegal meeting \(The Review\)](#)

A band apart

OMLET also looked into complaints about five closed meetings in Elliot Lake. Most did not violate the rules, but the Ombudsman found that one meeting in December 2014 improperly discussed booking fees for bands. He recommended improvements to council's procedures.

[Read the report](#)



Senior Counsel Laura Pettigrew discussed how the Ombudsman's new oversight of municipalities will work when Bill 8 (*Public Sector and MPP Accountability Act, 2014*) comes into force at the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario Municipal Clerks Forum on April 16.

TAKING TRUSTEES TO SCHOOL



Ombudsman André Marin explained what his expanded oversight will mean for school boards at the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association business seminar on April 30. He emphasized that his Office should be the last resort, and we will work with local complaint mechanisms to resolve issues.

LINK UP WITH US!

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for job postings, investigation updates and report releases, and more.

Pardon my personal pennies

The Ombudsman found the Town of Amherstburg misused the "personal matters" exception to the open meeting rules when it discussed bank signing authorities in closed session on December 10, 2014.

[Read the report](#)

[See more OMLET reports](#)

INVESTIGATIONS UPDATE

[Hydro One — billing and customer service issues:](#)

After drawing more than 10,600 complaints, this investigation has wrapped and the Ombudsman's preliminary recommendations and findings have been sent to the Ministry of Energy and Hydro One. They have two weeks to respond, after which the Ombudsman will finalize his report.

[Ontario direction to police on de-escalation:](#)

The Ombudsman is in the process of finalizing his report and is expected to release it later this year.

[Adults with developmental disabilities in crisis:](#)

Staff continue to resolve individual cases and take complaints - more than 1,200 to date. The large-scale systemic investigation continues, and the Ombudsman expects to release a report later in 2015.

Anyone who has information relevant to our ongoing investigations can contact our office at 1-800-263-1830, [file an online complaint](#) or email: info@ombudsman.on.ca.

WE'RE HIRING A 2016-2017 ARTICLING STUDENT!

Are you looking for an articling position? Look no further. We're accepting applications. [Read the full job description and apply here!](#)

IN THE HEADLINES

- › [DRESCHER: New councillors heed watchdog's bark \(The Hamilton Spectator\)](#)
- › [Liberals use beer to distract from electricity \(The Toronto Sun\)](#)
- › [Council goes in-camera to discuss 'council conduct' \(The Elliot Lake Standard\)](#)
- › [Amherstburg cited by ombudsman for closed meeting violation \(The Windsor Star\)](#)

TWEET TWEET

The Ombudsman launched a new French Twitter account ([@Ont_OmbudsmanFR](#)) at the Club canadien de Toronto on April 21. [Watch the video](#) (in French)

STAY CONNECTED

The Ombudsman has **3,624 Facebook fans** and **31,142 Twitter followers!** Please continue to reach out to us on social media, or drop us a line at thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.

And stay connected with our office in both official languages! Follow our French Twitter account: [@Ont_OmbudsmanFR](#).

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