

Ontario Ombudsman honoured for police oversight work

TORONTO (October 18, 2012) – Ontario Ombudsman André Marin was honoured last night by the U.S.-based National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE), for his significant work in exposing the challenges facing Ontario’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU).

Mr. Marin was presented with NACOLE’s inaugural Achievement in Oversight Award at the organization’s annual conference in San Diego, where he was also invited to speak to delegates about his recent investigation involving the SIU – the province’s civilian agency tasked with investigating cases where police are involved in the serious injury or death of civilians.

The award is in recognition of the Ombudsman’s “significant work in 2011 calling attention to the undermining of effective civilian oversight in Ontario by law enforcement agencies and the government,” said NACOLE awards chair Jason Wechter. It marks the first time NACOLE has given an award relating to police oversight in Canada.

Mr. Marin’s two investigations of the SIU are detailed in his reports *Oversight Unseen* (2008) and *Oversight Undermined* (2011). His recommendations in the first investigation sparked the SIU to hire more investigators with civilian (non-police) backgrounds, conduct more rigorous investigations and act more transparently. However, his second investigation found that the province’s Ministry of the Attorney General was undermining the SIU’s efforts to hold police to account, in the wake of strong resistance from police services. He continues to call on Ontario to implement clear new legislation to support the SIU in its oversight role.

NACOLE is a non-profit organization of agencies and individuals working to improve oversight of police in the U.S. The award comes on the heels of several other honours Mr. Marin has received this year, including the Ontario Bar Association’s Award of Distinction, the Canadian Bar Association’s John Tait Award, and induction into the University of Ottawa’s Common Law Honour Society.

Mr. Marin’s career has been devoted to bringing accountability to public institutions. He served as director of the SIU from 1996 to 1998, before becoming Canada’s first military ombudsman. As Ontario’s Ombudsman since 2005, his high-profile systemic investigations have sparked government reforms affecting millions of Ontarians, and his investigative models have been emulated by ombudsmen and other watchdog agencies around the world.

For further information, contact:

Linda Williamson, Director of Communications
416-586-3426
lwilliamson@ombudsman.on.ca