

ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS: Embargoed until 11 a.m., Tuesday, July 14

**Ontario Ombudsman calls on government to better protect students:  
Ministry incompetence led to private career college “disaster”**

TORONTO (July 14, 2009) – Ontario Ombudsman André Marin today urged the province’s Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to get tougher on unscrupulous private career colleges.

His latest special report, *Too Cool For School*, outlines the “unmitigated disaster” of Bestech Academy, an unregistered, illegal operation which the Ministry tolerated for more than two years – while actually paying for several students to attend classes there, and subsequently even hiring its president to work in the Ministry.

Bestech “was allowed to line its pockets with public funds while flouting the law,” Mr. Marin notes, adding that the Ministry’s “inattention, indifference and dereliction,” helped enable the college to prey on innocent students. Bestech operated campuses in Stoney Creek and St. Catharines, offering courses in gas technician technology before closing abruptly in October 2008, leaving students and staff out of pocket.

The case, investigated by the Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT), revealed a systemic failure by the Ministry to ensure students are protected, Mr. Marin says, noting the issue is urgent because the present economic climate has increased demand for the type of training offered by private career colleges.

The Ministry has accepted all of the Ombudsman’s recommendations for improvements except one – his call for a compensation scheme for the students. “Unfortunately, the Ministry has shown itself to be a slave to its own system, and unwilling to think and act out of the box in order to do the right thing by these students,” Mr. Marin says.

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*Aussi disponible en français*

Full report and backgrounder available at [www.ombudsman.on.ca](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca)

Video of Mr. Marin’s conference will be on the website and YouTube later today.

For further information or to arrange media interviews with Mr. Marin, please contact:

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