



ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS: Embargo until 11 a.m., Wednesday, July 16
Ombudsman to investigate monitoring of long-term care facilities

TORONTO (July 16, 2008) – Ontario Ombudsman André Marin today announced he will conduct a full systemic investigation into the province’s monitoring of long-term care facilities – and its effectiveness in ensuring nursing homes meet government standards.

“As Premier McGuinty recently said, these are our parents and grandparents in these facilities, and we have to do a better job for them,” Mr. Marin said. The Ombudsman’s Office has been reviewing more than 100 complaints about long-term care since early spring, including about 50 complaints received in the wake of media reports in early July about a significant number of nursing homes failing to meet government standards across the province.

“Clearly, there are unhappy people throughout the system – residents, their families and staff complain about conditions in long-term care homes, but there are also operators who say the standards are too bureaucratic,” the Ombudsman said. “If the monitoring system isn’t working, an independent investigation is the best way to get to the root of the problem and find solutions.”

The Ombudsman invited members of the public to come forward to his office with their experiences with long-term care and/or the province’s monitoring system. Complaints can be filed by calling 1-800-263-1830, or online at the Ombudsman’s website, www.ombudsman.on.ca, as well as by mail or fax. Complaints to the Ombudsman are kept confidential and the Ombudsman’s investigations are impartial and completely independent of government or any long-term care authority.

The investigation will focus on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (unlike ombudsmen in some other provinces, Mr. Marin’s mandate does not extend to nursing homes themselves). It will be conducted by the Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT), whose earlier investigations have sparked improvements to the property tax assessment system, newborn screening, criminal injuries compensation and the province’s lotteries. It is expected to take about six months.

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