

Backgrounder – Quotes from *Oversight Unseen*

“My investigation found that the Special Investigations Unit continues to struggle to assert its authority, maintain its balance against powerful police interests, and carry out its mandate effectively.” **(page 4, paragraph 4)**

“Delays in police providing notice of incidents, in disclosing notes, and in submitting to interviews are endemic.” **(page 5, paragraph 7)**

“The SIU has not only become complacent about ensuring that police officials follow the rules, it has bought into the fallacious argument that SIU investigations aren’t like other criminal cases and it is acceptable to treat police witnesses differently from civilians.” **(page 5, paragraph 8)**

“The SIU’s system of oversight is out of balance. It must not only ensure accountability of police conduct, but be perceived by the public as doing so.” **(page 5, paragraph 10)**

“Rather than attempting to scale the ‘blue wall,’ the SIU has adapted its practices and tried to go around it.” **(page 55 paragraph 196)**

“It has been too willing to accept excuses for delays and its own self-image of powerlessness.” **(page 55, paragraph 197)**

“We heard repeatedly from SIU staff and members of the public alike that the SIU was essentially ‘toothless.’ ” **(page 62, paragraph 221)**

“The SIU is practically pathological in its avoidance of public controversy and consistently goes for the path of least resistance.” **(Page 72, paragraph 259)**

“It is clear that something must be done to dispel the SIU’s image as a toothless tiger and muzzled watchdog if it is to earn the respect of police officials as well as the public at large.” **(Page 74, paragraph 265)**

“When civilians are seriously injured at the hands of police, it is critical that the results of the consequent criminal and administrative investigations are exposed to public view – to ensure confidence not only in police oversight, but in policing itself. That was the intent behind the creation of the SIU.” **(page 88, paragraph 317)**

“At present, the absence of publicly available explanations for the SIU Director’s decisions only helps feed conspiracy theories by critics who believe the SIU favours or is in collusion with the police.” **(page 88, paragraph 317)**

“In the minds of many community stakeholders, the continuing presence of a large number of former police officers at the SIU is a disturbing remnant of the past.” **(page 89 paragraph 321)**

“Even some of the SIU investigators we interviewed acknowledged that if the general public were aware of the composition of the SIU, it might leave the impression that the relationship between the SIU and the police was too cozy.” **(page 91, paragraph 331)**

“The SIU today is in a state of identity crisis.” **(page 102, paragraph 367)**

“The SIU is steeped at the moment in a culture of consensus – and while consensus can be a very good thing, it does not take the place of effective management.” **(page 105, paragraph 375)**

“The history of police oversight in Ontario is marked by successive governments reacting reflexively, whenever public controversy erupts. Consequently, government interest in reforming the SIU has tended to be short-lived and incomplete.” **(page 106, paragraph 377)**

“Continuing issues with police resistance are reflective of a system of oversight with too few consequences, and an SIU administration too reluctant to take decisive action.” **(page 106, paragraph 378)**

“The SIU was born out of public distrust of police investigating their own. It is critical that the organization move swiftly away from the police ties that continue to hold it back from being a truly civilian oversight body.” **(page 106, paragraph 378)**

“Ontario’s promise of civilian oversight of police in the context of incidents involving serious injury and death has yet to be fully realized. I have confidence that the established oversight model can still work – and work well. However, the SIU and the MAG will have to change their practices, and the government will have to implement legislative reform if the SIU is to achieve its full potential.” **(page 107, paragraph 381)**

“The SIU has signalled a willingness to implement my recommendations, however, for the most part, its commitments appear quite superficial and couched in vague and vapid generalities.” **(page 119, paragraph 396)**

“While the Ministry’s praise is certainly appreciated, it remains to be seen if the steps it has committed to take, including the rather amorphous promise of a dialogue with Ontarians on legislative change, will actually translate into the concrete and necessary improvements I have recommended.” **(page 120, paragraph 400)**