



**OMBUDSMAN
ONTARIO**

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provincial government service*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Ombudsman finds Ministry bound by its own red tape

TORONTO (September 1, 2005) - Bureaucratic obfuscation, errors, excuses and omissions are just some of the criticisms Ombudsman André Marin leveled at officials at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in his report titled, "From Hope to Despair".

The Special Ombudsman Response Team's (SORT) 35-day investigation into the provincial government's refusal to provide funding for a life-saving drug for Barrie teenager, Christopher Comeau-D'Orsay, resulted in the Ombudsman issuing a 40-page report released today. The report took the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to task on several issues, finding its conduct to be unreasonable, unjust, oppressive and wrong.

Seventeen-year-old Christopher suffers from a very rare, fatal neurodegenerative disease known as Batten's Disease CLN 1. The Ombudsman's report finds the Ministry's responses to requests for funding of Christopher's Cystagon were confused and lethargic. In addition, the report shows how Ministry officials constructed road-blocks to deny him the help he should have received, had its programs been operating as they were intended to.

"Rather than chose to help Christopher, for years the Ministry tied its own hands, putting its programs before people," Mr. Marin said. "Christopher's family experienced an exercise in bureaucratic futility that no Ontarian should ever be subjected to. I have made three recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to address this case."

Mr. Marin added, “The final chapter to this horrible saga was written earlier this week and it has a happy ending. I am pleased to report that the Ministry has accepted all our findings and recommendations and will be implementing them immediately. Despite the many trials and tribulations that the Comeau-D’Orsay family endured for years, the Deputy Minister and Minister have answered this office’s call for help and I commend their leadership on this important issue.”

This press release is also available in French. An electronic copy of the report “From Hope to Despair” is available on Ombudsman Ontario’s website: www.ombudsman.on.ca.

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The Ombudsman is an Officer of the Legislature and is independent of both the political process and government administration. Generally an office of last resort, the Ombudsman investigates and resolves complaints about provincial governmental organizations and recommends corrective action. Services are free and confidential. Other languages can be arranged. For further information, call 416-586-3300, 1-800-263-1830 (English); 1 800 387-2620 (Français); TTY 1-866-411-4211 or visit our website: www.ombudsman.on.ca

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