

ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS: For immediate release
Ombudsman to investigate OPP handling of stress injuries

TORONTO (March 31, 2011) – Ontario Ombudsman André Marin today announced he is launching an investigation into how the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) deals administratively with operational stress injuries (OSI) among its members. He will also investigate the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services’ administrative processes relating to OSI in police services across Ontario.

The term OSI is used to describe any persistent psychological difficulty that police personnel experience as a result of operational duties, including depression, anxiety, addictions and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Ombudsman’s office has received more than 30 complaints from active and retired OPP officers who raised concerns about a lack of understanding and awareness of OSI in the provincial police service and alleged that sufferers are often ostracized and stigmatized.

“We’ve heard from current and former officers who say that the attitude towards members with these conditions tends to be, ‘Suck it up and get on with your life,’ ” Mr. Marin said. “After careful consideration, I have determined that a systemic investigation is needed to examine not only the services and support provided to these officers, but the culture within the OPP towards operational stress injuries.”

The Ombudsman added that his office had also received similar complaints from municipal police officers and their family members. “While we do not have jurisdiction over these police services, we will be investigating what, if anything, the Ministry is doing about this issue for police officers across the province.”

The investigation, to be conducted by the Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT), will include examining the support, services, education and training offered by the OPP to its members regarding OSI.

Anyone who has any relevant information is asked to call 1-800-263-1830 during business hours or complete a confidential online complaint form at www.ombudsman.on.ca.

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