Attn. News Editors: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ombudsman now has the power to investigate
Niagara Health System

TORONTO (August 31, 2011) – Ontario Ombudsman André Marin now has the jurisdiction to investigate complaints about Niagara Health System, following the provincial government’s appointment of a supervisor for the institution.

Dr. Kevin Smith has been appointed as the hospital’s supervisor, reporting directly to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Niagara Health System is a multi-site hospital that includes Greater Niagara General in Niagara Falls, St. Catharines General and Ontario Street in St. Catharines, Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie, and sites in Welland, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Port Colborne.

While normally the Ombudsman does not have jurisdiction over hospitals in Ontario, that changes when the government takes direct control, since the Ombudsman does have jurisdiction over the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Ontario is the only province in Canada whose Ombudsman does not have a mandate to oversee hospitals or long-term care homes. Despite this, the Ombudsman’s office receives many serious complaints about these facilities every year that cannot be investigated. A total of 291 complaints about hospitals were received in fiscal 2010-2011.

Complaints about Niagara Health System or any provincial government service or agency may be made to the Ombudsman’s Office at 1-800-263-1830, or via the online complaint form available at www.ombudsman.on.ca.

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