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# THE watchdog

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## ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN RELEASES 2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

## HOW TO COMPLAIN

### Ombudsman plays key role in fairness, good governance in tough times: Annual Report 2009-2010



Ontario Ombudsman André Marin released his fifth annual report this week, emphasizing his office's critical role in ensuring that even the most difficult government decisions are fair.

- [2009-10 Annual Report \(PDF\)](#)
- [Read the 2009-10 Annual Report press release](#)
- [Ombudsman's remarks](#)
- [Facts and highlights](#)
- You Tube [Watch the news conference on the Ombudsman's channel](#)

"The Ombudsman can serve as a bulwark of democracy in troubled times, protecting citizens and helping government to improve in the face of a tough economy and fiscal constraint," says Mr. Marin, who was recently appointed to a second five-year term. As it marks its 35th anniversary in Ontario, the ombudsman institution (first created in 1809 in Sweden) can serve as "an unbiased overseer to listen to all sides, investigate thoroughly and provide balanced advice and guidance," Mr. Marin says.

This year's report details how the Ombudsman's work in systemic investigations, individual case resolutions and proactive problem solving has helped thousands of Ontarians and contributed to better governance.

One example is his special investigation into the funding of the cancer drug Avastin last fall – which resulted in the province lifting an arbitrary cap on payments for colorectal cancer patients who rely on the medication to prolong their lives. Another investigation was resolved when the province agreed to insure PET scans for certain cancer and cardiac indications, while others focused on the colleges and training sector, sparking reforms in the monitoring of private career colleges and the marketing of provincial colleges.

"It was my vision upon assuming office to return the Ombudsman institution in Ontario to its Swedish parliamentary roots – focusing on fighting administrative injustice and shaping good, sound public policy," Mr. Marin says in the report. In his next term, he plans to build upon the office's success in all of these areas, including the Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT) investigations that led to major changes in such areas as newborn screening, property assessment and the province's lottery system.

Mr. Marin stresses that "the great untold story" of his Office is its proactive work with government and many of its most complained-about agencies. "These aren't necessarily the high-profile cases that get a lot of press," he said. "This is about diligent, behind-the-scenes work with senior managers in government to fix problems before they fester and grow." Ombudsman staff triage complaints so the most urgent cases are dealt with quickly and potential systemic problems are nipped in the bud.

## REAPPOINTMENT OF ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN

### André Marin reappointed as Ontario Ombudsman



Ontario Ombudsman André Marin's reappointment to a five-year term was unanimously approved by all parties in the Legislature on June 1, 2010.

"I am very pleased to have the confidence of the Legislative Assembly and I and my staff are excited to be able to continue our important work," Mr. Marin said. "It's an honour to be asked to serve the people of Ontario for five more years."

The Ombudsman's Office investigates public complaints about some 500 Ontario government ministries, corporations, agencies, boards and commissions. Upon his

The Ombudsman's Office oversees and investigates close to 500 provincial ministries, agencies, tribunals, and Crown corporations.

## File a complaint online

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**Email:** [info@ombudsman.on.ca](mailto:info@ombudsman.on.ca)

**Write:** Ombudsman Ontario, Bell Trinity Square, 483 Bay St., 10th Floor, South Tower, Toronto, ON M5G 2C9.



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## CASE SUMMARY

### Powerful extension

#### Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure | Hydro One

A woman who was looking after her 81-year-old bedridden mother at home saw her Hydro One bill rise to \$600 a month because her mother required the constant use of oxygen and ventilation machines. She was finding it difficult to pay the bills, as she had a limited income and the spousal support she had been receiving had been reduced, but she had recently reduced her hydro arrears to \$1,300 from \$4,400.

Despite this, Hydro One sent her a notice advising her that her power supply would be cut within 24 hours



appointment on April 1, 2005, Mr. Marin created a special team to conduct major investigations into systemic problems, in addition to helping thousands of people with individual problems.

The government has accepted and championed virtually all of the Ombudsman's recommendations, sparking sweeping reforms to property tax assessments, newborn

screening, compensation of crime victims, the regulation of private career colleges, and the security of the provincial lottery system. Mr. Marin's investigative model has been emulated by ombudsmen and other administrative investigators across Canada and around the world.

In the past five years, the office has conducted some two dozen special investigations and handled more than 90,000 complaints. It also assumed responsibility for investigating complaints about closed municipal meetings in 2008, and has consistently come in under its \$10-million budget, returning \$347,000 to taxpayers over five years.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Ombudsman's Office, established in 1975. Mr. Marin is the sixth Ombudsman and the first to be reappointed.

The woman called her MPP and then the Ombudsman for urgent help, out of fear that her mother's life support would be turned off. An Ombudsman staff member contacted a senior official at Hydro One and explained the woman's circumstances. As a result, she was given an extra two weeks to pay her outstanding bills, which she managed to do with the assistance of family members.

- *Annual Report 2009-2010*

**WATCH IT ON YOUTUBE: [Ontario Ombudsman André Marin gets reappointed for a five-year term](#)**

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