



OMBUDSMAN
ONTARIO
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fair and accountable
provincial government service*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Children with severe disabilities focus of
Ombudsman's first Special Investigation**

TORONTO (April 25, 2005) – The Ombudsman of Ontario, André Marin, announced the launch of a new special Ombudsman response team and its first major investigation at a press conference held earlier today.

Mr. Marin said the primary focus of the investigation will be whether parents of children with severe disabilities are being forced to place them in the custody of Children's Aid Societies in order for them to obtain necessary care. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has stated that it has never and will never force any parent to relinquish custody of a child in order to access special needs supports.

Mr. Marin, who took office on April 1, 2005, said, "My investigation will determine whether parents have been placed in the unconscionable situation of choosing between retaining their parental rights and obtaining necessary residential care for their children with severe disabilities. I intend to use the extensive powers of my office in this first investigation by the newly created special Ombudsman response team."

Mr. Marin also made a plea to the public to come forward with any information that may assist in the investigation.

"We especially want to hear from families who may have been put in the untenable situation of having to give up custody of their children in order to have them properly cared for," he said.

Given the compelling nature and number of the complaints he has received, Mr. Marin noted that this issue is important and requires intensive special investigation.

Backgrounder attached.
This press release is also available in French.

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

For further information contact:

Gail Scala,
Manager, Communications
Ombudsman Ontario
416-586-3402