

The push and pull of Ontario's Police watchdog, the [Special Investigations Unit](#), continues after [Toronto Police Service Association](#) Union President Mike McCormack suggests.

It was only last year that the [Ontario Ombudsman's Office](#) headed by Andre Marin called the SIU a "toothless tiger." Well that kitty is all grown up now and has grown a nice set of teeth, and the TPA is "barking back".

Call it what you will, but politics should have no place in the determination of criminal charges. These are not only people's lives that are being thrown around, but also careers. I understand the role that the Ombudsman must play in society, however, to criticize the SIU is simply playing politics.

The [Ombudsman's report](#), criticizes the SIU for delays in interviewing police and witnesses, as well as not having any teeth. Well Mr. Marin, should you ever find yourself in the unfortunate position of being forced to take the life because yours or somebody else's was threatened with "serious bodily harm or death," and I'm sure the last thing on your mind would be where's the SIU, I must give my statement. I personally know at least three people who during my time as a police officer who were forced to take a life, and as great of people they are as police officers and in general, the event changed them. Although I never asked them about the immediate aftermath, I could say with confidence that I'm sure talking to the SIU was not ranking very high.

To furthermore call the SIU a toothless tiger is ridiculous. How much more of an impact can they have into an officer's life? They conduct their own separate investigation, free from the police, and they make the determination to lay charges. Yes, the SIU has the power to lay charges. Those dentally challenged little tigers apparently can inflict some damage (all sarcasm aside).

How in the wake of the September 2008 report, pendulum has swung in the opposite direction, and now the TPA is accusing the SIU of being too aggressive. The union's criticism of the SIU comes in a year that has so far seen six Toronto officers charged by the police watchdog compared to none last year.

“There’s an appearance that our members, based on the information that we have right now, that they’re being charged to fulfil a political agenda of the director, Ian Scott,” McCormack said.

“We’re concerned right now with the overcharging — that there are already some officers wrongfully charged,” union lawyer Peter Brauti said.

This is an understandable reaction from the union, whose primary function is to fight for its members. However, it seems that the numbers are concurring with McCormack is saying:

So far in 2009, 13 officers across the province have been charged by the SIU. That’s compared to three in 2008, six in 2007, two in 2006, three in 2005 and three in 2004.

Is it now time for Andre Marin to launch another investigation into the SIU, who under its new director Ian Scott, is charging four times the amount of people it did last year? Is it time for this little kitty to go to the proverbial dentist to have it’s teeth trimmed? I’m definitely wondering about that.

Under the [Police Services Act](#) officers are required to comply with the SIU, however, the perceived new tactics of the SIU are going to breed a new level of mistrust in officer who are going to tighten up their “[blueline](#)” which will result in are more prevalent “us vs. them” attitude.

The [Toronto Sun](#) went further by saying:

The SIU, a civilian law enforcement agency that reports to the attorney general, investigates cases involving police that have resulted in serious injury, sexual assault or death.

McCormack accused the SIU of laying charges against officers when there has been no civilian injury and no possibility of criminal wrongdoing.

He also said officers have had their charter rights violated, personal

property seized without warrants, and investigators have entered homes without a search warrant or consent.

“We’re concerned about the erosion of officer’s rights because if you go from a starting point that an SIU investigation is a criminal investigation, then there’s no reason why those officers in those investigations deserve any less rights than anyone else,” Brauti said.

Both the TPA and [Ontario Provincial Police Association](#) said they respect the role of the SIU, although McCormack said Toronto cops are feeling “mistrust” and “frustration” toward the organization.