



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## Ontario Not Fully Prepared to Respond to Large-Scale Emergencies: Auditor General

(TORONTO) There are weaknesses in emergency management planning and programs across Ontario that could impact the timeliness and effectiveness of a provincial response to a large-scale emergency, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2017 Annual Report*, tabled today in the Legislative Assembly.

“It is essential in a province the size of Ontario that the government be ready to act in the event of an emergency,” Lysyk said after her Report was tabled. “But plans have not been updated in years, and practising for emergencies through simulations are not frequently done.”

Ontario has the largest and, in places, the most concentrated population in Canada. In addition, it is also the largest nuclear jurisdiction (province or state) in North America.

Overall responsibility and the co-ordination of the Province’s emergency management program rests with the Provincial Emergency Management Office (EMO), a branch within the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management division of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

The audit found that:

- Oversight of emergency management in Ontario is the responsibility of the Cabinet Committee on Emergency Management—which has not met for several years.
- The last overall provincial risk assessment was done in 2012—based on emergencies experienced in Ontario up to 2009. As a result, the current provincial emergency management program has not considered emergencies that occurred after 2009, or the latest information on the effects of climate change, cyberattacks and terrorism.
- The two provincial emergency response plans prepared by EMO—the Provincial Emergency Response Plan and the Provincial Nuclear Response Plan (off-site response—outside the boundary of the nuclear power facility)—have not been updated since 2008 and 2009, respectively. Plans should be regularly updated for new information.
- The Province has no co-ordinated information technology (IT) system in place for emergency management. In 2009, EMO attempted to develop and implement a province-wide IT system for emergency management, but after extensive delays and user dissatisfaction, it discontinued the project in 2015 after having spent about \$7.5 million.

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