



News Release

For Immediate Release

November 22, 2021

Ontario's Poor Reporting on the State of the Environment Leaves the Public in the Dark: Auditor General

(TORONTO) The province is not providing comprehensive reports to the public about the overall state of Ontario's environment and natural resources, or its progress on meeting environmental goals and targets, says Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk in her *Annual Report of Environment Audits*.

"The public, stakeholders and decision-makers need to know the overall state of Ontario's environment so they can assess whether things are getting better or worse," said Lysyk. "There are a number of legislated deadlines for environmental reports, and the government is not meeting them."

The responsibility for monitoring, reporting on and improving the state of Ontario's environment and natural resources falls primarily to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has a key role in monitoring, reporting on and improving the environmental sustainability of Ontario's agriculture.

The audit report found that, although the three ministries publish reports on some environmental topics, there is no regular, comprehensive reporting to the public on the overall state of the environment.

For example, the Natural Resources Ministry has prepared the *State of Ontario's Natural Resources* report, which Ministry staff have been working on since 2017. It collected all the Ministry's reporting into what was supposed to be one easily navigated online report. But there are still no plans to release it publicly.

As another example, the Environment Ministry has stopped its regular reporting on the overall state of Ontario's water quality. The Ministry released *Water Quality in Ontario* reports between 2009 and 2016, but then stopped. This information is now published in many different reports, making it harder for the public to understand the overall state of Ontario's water.

"More than 20 years ago, our Office noted that the many ministry reports on the environment did not allow the public to evaluate the overall state of the environment," stated Tyler Schulz, Assistant Auditor General and Commissioner of the Environment in the Office. "Little has changed since then, and the public has the right to know the state of the environment, as it affects Ontarians' health and the health of the ecosystems we depend on."

This audit report includes 14 recommendations for improvement.

-30-

For more information, please contact:
Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General
(647) 267-9263

Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

 @OntarioAuditor