



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Province No Longer Conducting Environmental Monitoring of the Niagara Escarpment: Auditor General

(Toronto) Though Ontario legally recognized the need to conserve the Niagara Escarpment a half century ago, it is now failing to do it. In her *2022 Annual Report* Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says the government is not providing the financial and staffing resources needed to properly monitor and protect the areas that are covered by the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for administering the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act*, while the Niagara Escarpment Commission is tasked with implementing the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

“The Niagara Escarpment is an internationally recognized biosphere that is increasingly under threat without the conservation efforts that are needed,” Lysyk said. In Ontario, the Escarpment extends 725 kilometres from Tobermory on the Bruce Peninsula, to Queenston near Niagara Falls.

The report found that almost all development permit applications on the Escarpment have been approved in the last five years, and new and expanded aggregate operations on the Escarpment have been allowed despite the negative environmental impacts of pits and quarries. The government has also changed the Escarpment Plan to allow for development that harms endangered species’ habitat.

Environmental monitoring of the Escarpment has been cut because there are no Commission staff, resources or program for assessing the state of the Escarpment. The Commission has also had to scale back education and outreach activities, curtailing efforts to help the public take part in conservation efforts.

“As southern Ontario’s population grows, and demand for more homes and recreation areas increases, threats to the Escarpment will rise,” Lysyk said. “But Ontarians have every right to expect the Province to take stronger steps to conserve the Escarpment’s unique environment, as intended by the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, for everyone to enjoy now and into the future.”

The audit report includes 23 recommendations for improvement.

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Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

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