
Turning Ontario's climate targets into reality

*Environmental Commissioner of Ontario praises the new climate law,
but warns of tough road ahead*

Toronto, ON, November 22, 2016 — The Ontario government deserves congratulations for its new climate change law, but potential pitfalls lie ahead as the province puts its words into action. This was the message delivered today by Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO), at the release of her annual greenhouse gas (GHG) progress report.

The report, *Facing Climate Change*, lauds the government for its leadership in confronting the urgent threats posed by climate change. It is good news that Ontario met its 2014 emissions reduction target. However, future targets will prove more difficult, and there is no silver bullet.

"The government must stay the course, meet its targets, and achieve Ontario's fair share of real GHG reductions," said Saxe.

In May, Ontario passed its first climate change law, the *Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016* (the "*Climate Act*"). The law's three main components are: ambitious GHG reduction targets; a cap and trade program that puts a price on GHG pollution; and a Climate Change Action Plan that is to use proceeds from the program to fund additional GHG reductions.

Climate change is a complex problem and successfully implementing the new law will be challenging. The Commissioner offered some words of caution and advice: "Putting a price on GHG pollution was long overdue and the *Climate Act* is a good start. However, there are some dangers ahead."

The report provides recommendations that can help the government avoid significant risks, such as: excessive dependence on California pollution allowances; undermining the new law with unsubstantiated claims and conflicting policies; and misuse of the cap and trade proceeds.

The *Climate Act* is expected to reduce both Ontario's GHG emissions and its expensive dependence on imported fossil fuels. Without the Act, Ontario would likely have to import an additional \$300 million worth of petroleum products and natural gas every year by 2020, on top of the \$11 billion per year that Ontarians already pay.

"I am heartened by the new climate law," concluded Saxe, "and its strong commitment to fighting climate change. Our office looks forward to assessing how the government does in the next – and most important – phase: implementation."

Download the ECO's 2016 Greenhouse Gas Progress Report, *Facing Climate Change*, at eco.on.ca/reports/2016-facing-climate-change.

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*The **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario** is an independent officer of the Legislature who reports on government progress on climate change, energy and other environmental issues. The ECO is the province's environmental watchdog and guardian of Ontarians' environmental rights.*