



Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General of Ontario

Reflections

On April 1, 2019, we welcomed our new team members from the former Office of the Environmental Commissioner and together celebrated our expanded role of reporting on the government's responsibilities under the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*, and the opportunity to build on my Office's experience conducting value-for-money audits on provincial programs intended to protect the environment.

Then, in August 2019, after an external competition, I hired Jerry DeMarco as my fifth Assistant Auditor General and appointed him to manage our environmental audit portfolio as Commissioner of the Environment. For the upcoming year, an Audit Director and an Audit Supervisor from another audit portfolio will work in the environmental portfolio to further support the transition.

Since April 1, 2019, in addition to working on the three reports in *Volume 2—Reports on the Environment* of this year's *2019 Annual Report*, our new team members have been receiving training on our audit methodology and working-paper software and gaining field experience working with other audit teams in the Office on other value-for-money audits in *Volume 1* of our *2019 Annual Report*.

During the past year, there has been some public discussion suggesting Ontarians have lost their environmental watchdog. I want to assure Ontarians that this is not the case. We will perform the environmental audit work using the same high

standards and proven practices that apply to all of our work. As well, the powers and access rights of my Office (which are more extensive than those of the former Office of the Environmental Commissioner) are now available to the Commissioner of the Environment portfolio.

These powers include extensive access to information, including powers under the *Public Inquiries Act, 2009*. They also include the authority to audit environmental issues by visiting ministries, government agencies and organizations, and broader-public-sector organizations throughout Ontario. Our reports, once tabled in the Legislature, will automatically be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Committee may then choose to hold public hearings on the issues, programs or services audited in the reports.

These powers also bring with them responsibilities: they include the duty of confidentiality; the requirement to follow Office protocols and methodology, including professional auditing standards; the duty to maintain objectivity in all work performed; and the need to avoid situations that could result in a perceived or real conflict of interest. In addition, we as an Office audit the implementation and delivery of government policy and do not question government policy itself. Policy commentary is left to Members of the Legislature and external stakeholders.

Volume 2—Reports on the Environment of this *2019 Annual Report* is the first consolidated report

issued by our Office as per sections 51(1) and 51(3) of the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*. Section 51(1) states: “The Auditor General shall report annually to the Speaker of the Assembly with regard to the operation of this Act, and the Speaker shall lay the report before the Assembly as soon as reasonably possible.” As per section 51(3), “The annual report may, in the Auditor General’s discretion, be included in the Auditor General’s annual report prepared under section 12 of the *Auditor General Act*.”

Volume 2 includes the following three chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of Ontario’s environmental trends and key challenges regarding our air; water; land resources and waste; nature and wildlife; and climate change. Ontario, like other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, is facing a number of environmental challenges. Throughout most of history, the earth’s natural systems have worked to achieve balance in the environment. These systems, also known as “ecosystem services,” have allowed the human population to grow and expand. However, population growth and economic development have put much pressure on the natural systems that have sustained humanity, including Ontario’s population.

This first chapter also outlines the provincial legislation that addresses the environment, as well as the environmental responsibilities shared by different levels of government—federal, provincial and municipal. The overview also explains that some environmental issues, such as climate change, can be impacted by and can impact many different natural systems. The report makes one key recommendation—that the province develop key indicators and targets and provide regular state-of-the-environment reporting on its Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.

Chapter 3 reports on the province’s plan to address climate change and analyzes the information that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (Ministry) is using to develop a response to climate change, while supporting a prosperous economy. According to the most recent data (see **Figure 10** in **Chapter 3**), Ontario’s 2017

emissions were 159 megatonnes (Mt). Canada produces 1.5% of global emissions. Ontario produces 22.2% of the Canadian total, and 0.3% of total global emissions. The average emissions per person per year in Ontario of 11 tonnes are the second-lowest in Canada after Quebec. However, this is higher than in many developed countries, and almost twice the world average of six tonnes.

The Ministry’s Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan (Plan) details Ontario’s current greenhouse-gas emissions (using a 2018 estimate of 160.9 Mt), where they come from, and the initiatives that the Ministry has identified that could further reduce those emissions. Our Office’s analysis found that the emissions reductions in the Plan are not yet supported by sound evidence, and we make recommendations that focus on provincial actions needed to address this as the province works toward reducing emissions to 143.3 Mt by 2030.

Chapter 2 details the compliance of prescribed Ontario ministries with their responsibilities under the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* (EBR). The EBR requires these ministries to have an up-to-date Statement of Environmental Values that reflects the government’s priorities and each ministry’s related responsibilities. These ministries are also required to notify and consult with the public on environmentally significant government initiatives and respond to Ontarians when they request environmental reviews, a right guaranteed under the EBR.

We noted that a number of ministries still need to update their Statement of Values to align with the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan released in November 2018, and that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, which has primary responsibility for protecting the environment in Ontario, needs to do more to lead by example in complying with the requirements of the EBR. In contrast, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs fully met their responsibilities under the EBR. With the exception of needing to update its Statement of Environmental Values, the Ministry

of Transportation met all of its responsibilities. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, and the Ministry of Infrastructure met almost all of their responsibilities.

These three chapters represent the first of many more reports to follow in the coming years as we perform audits on provincial environment-related programs that are intended to protect the environment, and as we continue to report annually to the Legislature on prescribed ministries' compliance with the EBR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie Lysyk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bonnie" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Lysyk".

Bonnie Lysyk, MBA, FCPA, FCA
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