



Video Transcript

Value-for-Money Audit: Setting Indicators and Targets, and Monitoring Ontario's Environment (2020)

I'd like to talk to you about our audit Setting Indicators and Targets, and Monitoring Ontario's Environment.

Ontario's natural environment supplies Ontarians with many and varied benefits, such as water, food, energy, resources and medicines. Overall, healthy ecosystems sustain the quality of air, water and soils, and provide habitat and resources to support wildlife, humans and agriculture.

Environmental monitoring and reporting is important so that decision-makers and the public have a sufficient picture of the state of the environment and whether it is improving or worsening.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs are responsible for many programs that collect information about the environment.

We performed this audit because it is important that the province has effective systems and processes in place to set targets, collect data and assess this data against its targets as a means to monitoring whether provincial environment goals in legislation, strategies, plans and policies are achieved.

This include goals such as:

- protecting safe drinking water
- reducing waste and toxic chemicals in the environment
- supporting health and habitats of species at risk, game animals and native fish
- improving soil and pollinator health and
- reducing or eliminating air pollution and greenhouse gases.

The objective of our audit was to assess whether the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs have effective systems and procedures to:

- establish targets to help achieve environmental goals;
- collect the information needed to monitor progress; and
- monitor and publicly report on the state of the environment, natural resources and the environmental sustainability of Ontario's agriculture.



Overall, we concluded the three ministries do not have effective systems and processes to ensure effective long-term monitoring of Ontario's environment, natural resources and agriculture, or progress toward meeting legislated and policy goals.

We found the Environment Ministry's air and water monitoring programs are designed to meet legislative and regulatory requirements, inter-jurisdictional agreements and other commitments.

However, overall:

- Overarching targets have not been set in some areas, such as invasive species, species at risk, soil health and water conservation;
- Few monitoring programs have standardized monitoring protocols, performance measurement frameworks, program evaluations, or data management plans; and
- The Natural Resources Ministry has not developed an integrated, broad-scale biodiversity monitoring program, even though there was a commitment to do so.

Our report contains **15** recommendations. They include:

- That all three ministries establish processes for developing outcome-based, evidence-based and time-bound targets.
- That the Natural Resources Ministry implement comprehensive monitoring of biodiversity and wild pollinators.
- That the Environment Ministry establish a database to track and follow-up on actions to protect and recover species at risk, and
- that all three ministries develop and implement documented processes to collect and manage data, measure program performance, and evaluate monitoring programs.