



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## Little Provincial Attention on Urban Flooding: Auditor General

(Toronto) The absence of provincial co-ordination on responsibilities for reducing flooding from overwhelmed drainage systems increases the risk to homes and businesses of millions of Ontarians, says Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk. In her *2022 Annual Report*, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk points out that although four provincial ministries have responsibilities in this area – Environment, Conservation and Parks; Natural Resources and Forestry; Municipal Affairs and Housing; and Infrastructure – gaps remain.

“All Ontarians who live in cities, towns and smaller communities may be at risk of flooding,” said Lysyk. “The Province could make changes to reduce the risk – by updating the Building Code and improving urban flood risk mapping tools, and better protecting the green spaces and natural spaces, such as wetlands, that provide natural protection for communities.”

Homeowners need guidance from the Province on what they can do to reduce the threats to their properties, as well as effective incentives to adopt preventive measures. Many homeowners aren't aware that they may have increased risk of flooding. Many people who buy new homes are not protected from sewer backups due to vague requirements in Ontario's Building Code for backwater valves.

“A backwater valve costs about \$250 to install during construction of a new home, while renovating to add one costs thousands, and damage to a flooded home can cost more than \$40,000 to repair,” said Lysyk. “An update to the Ontario Building Code to require a backwater valve in all newly built homes is a sensible measure that could save many Ontarians tens of thousands of dollars and months of headache caused by urban flooding.”

In addition, southern Ontario continues to lose green space and wetlands that help control flooding. The Province has not evaluated many wetlands and designated them for protection. Climate change increases the likelihood of more frequent and severe rainfalls which overburden storm sewers and other stormwater infrastructure, and increases the risk of urban flooding.

A record-breaking rainfall in Toronto in 2013, which caused both urban and river flooding, was Ontario's costliest disaster ever. Insurance claims from 7,000 flooded basements and 900,000 households left without power, amounted to about \$1 billion.

“The Province is well aware of the need to do more on this issue,” said Lysyk. “These four ministries need to develop a provincial framework for reducing the risk of urban flooding that clearly identifies and assigns roles and responsibilities.”

The audit report includes 16 recommendations for improvement.



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Read the report at [www.auditor.on.ca](http://www.auditor.on.ca)

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