



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Government Decisions on Energy, Land Use and Housing Lacked Meaningful Public Consultation

(TORONTO) The government made significant changes to energy, land-use planning and housing policies without meaningful consultation, undermining Ontarians' ability to participate in decisions that can impact the environment, Acting Auditor General Nick Stavropoulos said today.

“We have seen some improvements over the past five years, but ministries must do more to ensure members of the public can effectively exercise their right to participate in environmentally significant decisions.”

In our 2023 annual audit, we found that the government did not follow the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* (EBR Act) when it made sweeping changes to the Province's land use and housing framework and removed lands from the Greenbelt. The government, led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, made these changes to increase housing supply without adequate public consultation. Three ministries — Municipal Affairs and Housing; Environment, Conservation and Parks; and Natural Resources and Forestry — did not give the public complete information about the proposed changes. As well, the limited time provided for comments did not allow newly elected municipal councils to effectively participate, or the ministries to consider all the comments they received.

Our audit also found that the Ministry of Energy failed to consult the people of Ontario before making decisions about a new clean energy plan and changes to the framework for electricity conservation programs.

Despite our Office's past recommendations, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has not added any more ministries or laws to the list of those that are subject to the EBR Act, nor taken steps to enable public consultation before environmentally significant Minister's Zoning Orders are issued under the *Planning Act*.

“It's critical that ministries meet their obligations under the *Environmental Bill of Rights* and take the necessary steps to provide Ontarians with information needed to effectively participate in consultations regarding decisions that affect the environment,” said Stavropoulos.

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For more information, please contact:

Becky Fong, Manager, Strategic
Communications and Engagement
becky.fong@auditor.on.ca
Cell: 416-529-2099

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