



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Auditor General Prepares for Expanded Environmental Responsibilities

(TORONTO) Work is well under way at the Office of the Auditor General to prepare for the Office's expanded environmental responsibilities under the *Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018*, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said today.

"We look forward to doing our part to ensure that the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) continues to be upheld and that Ontario's air, land and water resources continue to be protected," Lysyk said. "The EBR empowers the public to play an important role in helping to protect our environment and holding the government accountable for its decisions that impact the environment."

Late last year, the Office began internal reviews to determine how best to accommodate our expanded responsibilities so that we can best serve the members of the Legislative Assembly and, through it, the people of Ontario. We have been meeting with staff at the Environmental Commissioner's Office and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. As well, we have examined how the federal and Quebec auditor general offices, both of which have responsibility for environmental audit and review work, carry out their responsibilities.

Lysyk noted that although the Act says her Office must begin performing this work no later than May 1, 2019, the Office would be prepared to work under the new environmental mandate if Schedule 15 was proclaimed as soon as April 1, 2019. Most of the ECO's specialized technical staff have been offered positions with the Auditor General's Office. Recruitment is also under way for a Commissioner of the Environment.

The Auditor General noted that her Office already had a long history of performing audits on environmental issues, including Non-hazardous Waste Disposal (2010); the Drive Clean Program (2012); Source Water Protection (2014); Management of Contaminated Sites and the Mines and Minerals Program (both in 2015); Climate Change, Environmental Approvals, and Environmental Assessments (all in 2016); the Technical Standards and Safety Authority and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (both in 2018).

Lysyk added that her Office has developed institutional awareness about how to accommodate new responsibilities in its 133-year history. In 1978, for example, the Office was given a new mandate to conduct value-for-money audits; and in 2004 this was expanded to include audits in the broader public sector (for example, school boards, hospitals, long-term-care homes, children's aid societies, and colleges and universities). In 2005, the Office became responsible for vetting most government advertising to ensure that it is not partisan, and for reviewing the government's Pre-Election Report highlighting whether the government's fiscal projections are reasonable.

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