

BACK TO BASICS

**2018 Environmental  
Protection Report:  
Ministry Comments**



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## **Volume 1, Chapter 1:** **The Environmental Bill of Rights**

### Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) appreciates the Environmental Commissioner's commitment to the Environmental Bill of Rights and monitoring ministries' performance. OMAFRA is committed to meeting its obligations under the Environmental Bill of Rights Act, 1993. The ministry will consider the Environmental Commissioner's recommendations to improve OMAFRA's Environmental Bill of Rights performance.

### Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks would like to thank the Commissioner for recognizing our work in modernizing the Environmental Registry and the high quality of our notices.

Ontario is committed to an ongoing public dialogue to help us find the most effective and innovative solutions to the environmental challenges we face. Our government received a strong mandate from the people of Ontario to bring to an end the cap and trade program. The intention to cancel cap and trade was made clear throughout the recent Ontario election. The Cap and Trade Cancellation Act was posted to the Environmental Registry for a 30-day public consultation, closing on October 11, 2018, and passed third reading in the legislature on October 31. The ministry will soon be posting a Decision Notice to the Environmental Registry which will provide a summary of the comments received and how they were considered as part of the consultation process. We also heard from a number of presenters, including industries, associations, environmental organizations, investment experts and labour councils through the public hearing process for the legislation.

We have also invited the public, businesses and other interested parties to provide early input on some of the key areas of focus of our made-in-Ontario environment plan.

We will take these ideas into consideration as we continue a more formal consultation on the plan, which will be posted for public comment on the Environmental Registry in late fall for a 60-day period.

## Ministry of Government and Consumer Services – Ontario Digital Service

MECP and the Ontario Digital Service were honoured to partner on this crucial project, and we are grateful to receive the ECO's commendation for this work. Together, we have aimed to create a digital resource that is easy to understand, uses plain language, and puts users first—while meeting government and legal requirements. By providing an accessible tool that responds to Ontarians' needs, we have worked to ensure that people across the province can participate in government decision-making, through simpler, faster, better digital channels.

## Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

With respect to Volume 1, Chapter 1, Section 1.4.5 on the Environmental Bill of Rights posting of the modernized Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), namely Safe Water and Healthy Environments, the ministry makes the following comments:

- The ministry undertook extensive engagement in the process to modernize the OPHS and their protocols and guidelines under the OPHS, which set minimum requirements for public health programs and services of Ontario's 35 Public Health Units (PHUs). The consultation took place in partnership with experts in the public health sector including public health units, industry partners and the ministry's scientific advisor, Public Health Ontario.
- The ministry is aware and remains committed to the responsibility to post proposal notice(s) for any environmentally significant decision(s) on the Environmental Registry to allow for public comment. Updates to the modernized Safe Water and Healthy Environments standards referred to in the Volume 1, Chapter 1, Section 1.4.5 of the report were not viewed to have any environmentally significant implications.

We appreciate the collaboration of your office on matters of the natural environment and your consideration of our feedback on the report.

## Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) is pleased that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) Commissioner recognized the ministry's continued commitment to sustain a positive relationship with her and her staff. MNRF appreciates the ECO's assessment of the Ministry's success in meeting its EBR obligations. MNRF will continue its work to update internal processes which will allow the ministry to meet its EBR responsibilities.

MNRF is encouraged with the ECO's praise for its efforts in making the ministry's Statement of Environmental Values more meaningful and the ECO's support in the ministry's aim of increasing its awareness through staff training, and new implementation tools.

## **Volume 1, Chapter 2: EBR Applications for Review and Investigation**

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

### **ECO Comment**

Application to review the need for a new Act and/or regulation with respect to preventing the clearcutting and burning of woodlots for agricultural uses in areas with less than 30 percent tree cover.

The Ministry denied the application.

### **MMAH Response**

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2014 includes policies to protect prime agricultural areas and natural heritage features and areas, including significant woodlands, for the long term. Decisions on planning matters are required to be consistent with the PPS, 2014.

Municipalities will be required to adopt and maintain policies with respect to the manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality (section 270(1) para 7 of the Municipal Act). It will be in effect on March 1, 2019.

## **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Reviewing EBR Performance: EBR Report Cards 2017/2018**

Ministry of Transportation

MTO is very pleased to have met and exceeded the ECO's expectations in every applicable category in the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Report Card.

## Volume 2, Chapter 1: Protecting Ontario's Drinking Water from Pollution

### Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Ontario's farmers understand the importance of protecting Ontario's drinking water and preventing excess nutrients from entering Ontario's groundwater and waterways.

OMAFRA has put significant effort into working with the Source Water Protection Risk Management Officials to ensure that the risks present on agricultural operations are known and understood. The ministry has also put significant effort into ensuring Risk Management Officials understand the Nutrient Management Regulation and the contents of a nutrient management strategy and plans and how they mitigate risks to source water. OMAFRA will continue to work with Source Protection Committees and conservation authorities to ensure Ontario's drinking water is protected.

### Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

#### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks use the knowledge and tools developed through the source protection program to protect other water resources from contamination, particularly drinking water sources for the other 18% of Ontarians where drinking water sources are not protected by the Clean Water Act.

#### **MECP Response**

Under the Clean Water Act, municipalities have the authority to include clusters of private wells in a local source protection plan. Municipalities are encouraged to first look at how they can take steps and use tools such as the Planning Act, Municipal Act and Building Code, to protect vulnerable sources of drinking water. Where these tools are not enough, municipalities may consider passing a resolution to include these systems.

Landowners can also take steps to protect their own private wells by properly maintaining them, ensuring that their septic systems are functioning properly, and that any on-site sources of contamination are properly stored and managed (i.e. fuel oil tanks, pesticides).

The ministry is developing guidance to help municipalities make these local decisions, including how to use existing science, simplified methods for areas with limited information, and approaches that can be used for these local actions. Initial guidance is anticipated in December 2018.

## **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks amend the Technical Rules to include threats to groundwater from above-grade outdoor fuel storage tanks as significant threats as soon as possible.

## **MECP Response**

The ministry is reviewing fuel circumstances related to groundwater and will make changes, if warranted. At this time, we have not identified any issues with these circumstances within the current Tables of Drinking Water Threats, however, our review is still ongoing.

## **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks add TSSA instruments related to liquid fuels to the list of prescribed instruments under the Clean Water Act, 2006.

## **MECP Response**

Certain criteria were used to determine which instruments to prescribe within the General Regulation under the Clean Water Act. These included ensuring the instrument could:

- have legislative authority over activities that may impact sources of drinking water
- include specific terms and conditions of operation
- be amended
- manage ongoing activities
- address site-specific activities or land uses that are within the list of prescribed drinking water threats.

While approximately 20 instruments issued by either the Ministry of Government Services or Technical Standards and Safety Authority were assessed, the licences and other instruments under the Technical Standards and Safety Act were determined not able to meet these criteria.

Other policy tools available under the Clean Water Act and General Regulation were, and continue to be, available when addressing risks to sources of drinking water posed by fuel. This includes the Part IV tools (s.57 prohibition and s.58 risk management plans), land use planning, promoting best management practices, and education and outreach.

**ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the OMAFRA review, and as needed amend, nutrient management plans for farms within a vulnerable source water area to ensure the plans comply with source protection policies, and that the MECP prioritize inspecting these farms to ensure compliance with the plans.

**MECP Response**

The ministry employs a risk-based approach to our proactive inspections program for activities that are subject to regulation under the Nutrient Management Act. Areas where nutrient management activities may be deemed a significant drinking water threat are considered a priority risk factor for inspection. Large farms (i.e., >300 Nutrient Units) which are subject to a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) are also prioritized for inspection. Ministry staff employ a range of voluntary and mandatory abatement tools to address non-compliance identified during an inspection.

**ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the MECP take action to ensure that historical conditions that have been identified as significant drinking water threats are controlled or remediated so that they cease to pose a risk to drinking water sources.

**MECP Response**

Three source protection committees included policies to complement the more fulsome set of actions available under the Environmental Protection Act. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has established processes to monitor, identify and follow-up on any significant drinking water threats. We continue to find opportunities with our partners to enhance our collaborative response to threats as required. The ministry's contaminated sites program proactively works with site owners and operators to identify and mitigate health and environmental risks. The ministry continues to encourage responsible site management, proactive clean-up and appropriate site decommissioning plans to minimize the potential impact on drinking water sources.

**ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ontario government commit steady-state multi-year funding for the source protection program to ensure that the MECP, conservation authorities, municipalities and source protection committees have sufficient capacity to successfully implement, monitor, review and amend source protection plans.

**MECP Response**

Protecting Ontario's sources of drinking water is a shared responsibility. Local source protection plans give responsibilities to municipalities, several ministries, and conservation authorities to address identified risks to drinking water sources. To date, the Ontario government has invested over \$280M

in the source protection program. This investment has created watershed science that provides the foundation needed for ongoing updates to source protection plans.

## Volume 2, Chapter 2: Polluting Our Waters

### Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Nutrient Management legislation is one tool OMAFRA uses to protect Ontario's water. The Nutrient Management Act and the General Regulation were implemented to set an environmentally-protective standard for large and expanding livestock operations.

Best management practices are tools that supports the reduction of nutrient run-off. OMAFRA, other governments and many academics research best management practice effectiveness at the field and watershed scales through on-farm measurement, modelling and demonstration, applying the learnings to optimize program and policy design as part of continuous improvement approaches. Through cost-share programs, OMAFRA supports best management practices that have been extensively researched and widely accepted as effective by subject matter experts.

Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, stewardship funding priorities have been focused on improving the soil health of Ontario's farmland and reducing nutrients loss, in particular phosphorus, from agriculture production into Ontario's Great Lakes with focus on Lake Erie. In addition to cost share programs, OMAFRA also engages partner ministries and industry to deliver initiatives to reduce phosphorus run-off such as education and awareness tools and programs such as Best Management Practice booklets, Timing Matters initiative, Environmental Farm Plans, and Farmland Health Check-Up and agricultural software planning tools such as NMAN and AgErosion.

### Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

#### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the MECP insert, into the environmental compliance approval of every municipality that has a combined sewer system, a legal obligation to adopt a public Pollution Prevention Control Plan to virtually eliminate combined sewer overflows within a reasonable time, and the MECP should enforce these Plans.

#### **MECP Response**

In 2017, MECP developed and implemented a new municipal sewage works environmental compliance approval template. This includes standard conditions applicable to all municipal sewage works.

It is now a requirement that the owner, on an annual basis, provide the ministry with a summary of actions taken to ensure compliance with Procedure F-5-1, including but not limited to projects undertaken and completed in the sanitary sewer system that resulted in overall bypass/overflow elimination. Owners are also required to include estimated expenditures and proposed projects for the following year.

An additional requirement for Owners of combined or partially separated sewer systems is to provide a summary of actions taken to ensure compliance with Procedure F-5-5 and establish /maintain a Pollution Prevention and Control Plan.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ministry of Infrastructure and the MECP work with municipalities to achieve full-cost recovery for stormwater and sewage systems.

### **MECP Response**

Municipalities currently have the authority to set their own rates for stormwater and sewer services, and can recover the full cost of providing these services to residents and businesses. A number of municipalities (e.g., Kitchener, Mississauga) have implemented stormwater management utility fees to recover the cost of these services. Building on this, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (led by the Ministry of Municipal and Housing) was updated in 2017 to require that municipalities develop stormwater master plans and wastewater master plans that 'identify the full life cycle costs of the stormwater infrastructure and wastewater systems, including maintenance costs, and develop options to pay for these costs over the long-term'. MECP will continue to work with municipal partners and partner ministries towards the goal of effective stormwater and wastewater management.

MECP continues to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure that is responsible for regulating asset management for stormwater and sewage infrastructure to ensure sustainable systems for safeguarding the public and the environment. However, the decision to establish or set stormwater cost recovery fees in Ontario lies at the local municipal level rather than provincial.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO reiterates our 2017 recommendation that Ontario ban the spreading of manure and fertilizer on frozen ground, snow covered or saturated ground, with no exceptions.

### **MECP Response**

One of the actions under the 2018 Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan to achieve phosphorus load reductions, commits Ontario to engaging with key sectors as it considers further restrictions on the application of nutrients during the non-growing season, with a focus on conditions when there is higher risk of nutrient loss, such as when the ground is frozen or snow covered.

MECP will continue to work with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, key sectors, rural communities and others to consider a range of tools to mitigate the environmental impacts of runoff from frozen ground, snow covered or saturated ground.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ontario government adopt clear targets, effective monitoring and financial incentives for dramatic reductions in phosphorus runoff from farms.

### **MECP Response**

MECP supports actions to reduce phosphorus runoff within Ontario's watersheds. Regional watershed planning represents an opportunity to establish watershed specific objectives and targets to mitigate environmental impacts to watersheds. MECP will continue to work with municipalities and conservation authorities on the implementation of provincial policy direction related to watershed planning.

2018 Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan has numerous actions that are directed at effecting changes to the ways in which nutrients, soils and water are managed on agricultural and rural properties.

MECP will continue to work with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, key stakeholders and rural communities with the goal of achieving sustainable agricultural practices in Ontario.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the MECP update the limits in the MISA regulations and environmental compliance approvals, to require industries to use the best available technology to minimize toxic substances discharged into Ontario waters, and to require industries to virtually eliminate discharges of persistent toxic substances.

### **MECP Response**

All facilities that discharge effluent into Ontario's waterways (including those regulated under the MISA Program) are subject to the Ontario Water Resources Act requirement to have an Environmental Compliance Approval to be established and operated. The required Environmental Compliance Approvals are issued based on the assessment of the local receiving water body and include effluent monitoring requirements and contaminant concentration and loading limits that are protective of the receiving water body.

In many cases, the contaminant limits in conditions of the Environmental Compliance Approvals for these facilities are more stringent than the limits under the MISA regulations.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the MECP and the Ministry of Transportation compare the cost-effectiveness of de-icing alternatives in terms of both the cost of the product, and of that alternative's negative impacts on infrastructure, on the environment and on drinking water supplies.

### **MECP Response**

Protecting local drinking water sources is an important first step in ensuring Ontario's communities are confident in the quality and quantity of their drinking water. MECP, as part of the Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network and numerous other programs, has been monitoring levels of chloride in Ontario's lakes and streams for decades. While many of Ontario's lakes and streams are below the Canadian Water Quality Guidelines, chloride levels are increasing, especially near areas of high population and road densities. Additionally, the ministry is aware that some Ontario municipalities are already exploring de-icing alternatives, such as beet wastewater to help with snow and ice management. MECP will consider this recommendation moving forward in any future discussions with the Ministry of Transportation with regards to snow and ice management and in the development of any future Great Lakes protection and restoration policies or programs.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the MECP and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing require each municipality to adopt a salt management plan, and to review and publicly report on their effectiveness on a regular basis.

### **MECP Response**

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks understands that the use of road salts is an important environmental issue, and that it is also a significant safety issue. Road salts are a vital tool in maintaining safe roads in Ontario. Salt can be one of many environmental factors that influence watershed health. MECP will continue to work with municipalities and conservation authorities on the implementation of provincial policy direction related to watershed planning. Provincial policies, like the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe contain provisions for watershed planning and the need for municipalities to protect, improve or restore watershed health. Through effective watershed planning, the impacts of salt on watershed health can be mitigated.

### **ECO Recommendation**

ECO recommends that the Ontario government require all contractors retained to provide winter maintenance on property that is publicly owned or open to the public (e.g., public parking lots) to be certified in the proper use of salt.

### **MECP Response**

Protecting our local drinking water sources is an important first step in ensuring Ontario's communities are confident in the quality and quantity of their drinking water. The ministry is aware of successful certification programs for salt application in Ontario and will consider this recommendation in future conversations with partners and in the development any future Great Lakes protection and restoration policies or programs.

### **ECO Recommendation**

The ECO recommends that the Ontario government adopt a law that provides liability protection for landowners and contractors who use up-to-date technologies and snow management practices to achieve road safety with the minimum amount of salt.

### **MECP Response**

Protecting our local drinking water sources is an important first step in ensuring Ontario's communities are confident in the quality and quantity of their drinking water and will consider this recommendation in future conversations with partners and in the development any future Great Lakes protection and restoration policies or programs.

### **Ministry of Transportation**

MTO recognizes the importance of ensuring road-user safety while managing the environmental impact of road salt discussed in Chapter 2 of the report.

In 2005, MTO developed a Salt Management Plan in response to Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) 2004 release of the "Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts" (Code). In 2017, MTO issued a Supplement to the Code to be used in conjunction with the initial 2005 plan, building on MTO's vision, achievements and new industry directions, while maintaining the key principles to ensure public safety on Ontario's highways and minimize the environmental impact of road salt.

The 2017 Supplement takes into consideration the latest industry direction including ECCC's "Five-year Review of Progress: Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts" released in 2012 and the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) "Salt Management Guide, Second Edition" released in 2013.

Overall, MTO meets or exceeds all of the Best Management Practices (BMP) and targets for road salt management, and continues to seek innovative ways to further reduce the environmental impacts of

road salt. MTO works closely with many organizations from across Ontario, Canada, North America, Europe, and China sharing new information and opportunities.

MTO continues to use BMP's on all highways, not only in salt vulnerable areas (SVA). MTO continues to work with ECCC and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks in seeking more efficient methods to identify SVA's. MTO also continues to work with industry and academia seeking new innovative solutions for SVA's.

Future reviews of MTO's Salt Management Plan will be undertaken at significant milestones including ECCC's release of the next five-year review of the Code, significant updates in BMP's, and innovations in technology and materials etc.

## **Volume 3, Chapter 1: Good Science, Better Decisions: Monitoring Ontario's Species and Ecosystems**

### **Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry**

MNRF is entrusted with the stewardship of Ontario's natural resources, and is committed to conserving biodiversity and natural resources in a sustainable manner. Sound scientific knowledge is required to inform and evaluate Ontario's natural resource policies and management decisions.

The ministry achieves this by undertaking numerous monitoring activities, including inventorying the status and trends of organisms to monitor ecosystem health; identifying the social and economic use of natural resources; assessing the effects that natural disturbances have on natural resources; and evaluating whether specified management activities had the desired effect.

MNRF invests in monitoring infrastructure and information, and has been engaged in monitoring activities for decades. The ministry is modernizing its approach to monitoring and reporting on natural resources to help sustain a healthy environment that continues to support Ontario's social and economic priorities.

## **Volume 3, Chapter 2: Keeping Nature Healthy: Managing Wildlife Disease in Ontario**

### **Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**

OMAFRA is working closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in the updating of the Ontario Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance and Response Plan.

### **Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry**

MNRF has long recognized the potential threat to Ontario's biodiversity posed by emerging wildlife diseases, and is well placed to respond. MNRF recognizes the importance of wildlife diseases monitoring and surveillance, as well as the value of cooperative, partnership initiatives such as our twenty-year relationship with the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative.

Ontario's wildlife disease surveillance is anchored in partnership approaches and is intended to ensure quick sharing of information and resources, and the development and maintenance of networks of professionals. These partnership initiatives are led by an overriding one health concept, recognizing the linkages between human and wild and domestic animal health.

Ontario's participation in the development of the recently endorsed Pan-Canadian Approach to Wildlife Health affirms the province's commitment to strategic planning and coordinating of wildlife health surveillance, intelligence and response.

## **Volume 4, Chapter 1: Protecting Southern Ontario's Wetlands**

### **Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**

OMAFRA recognizes the value of wetlands for agricultural sustainability, providing flood protection, water management, nutrient management and pollinator habitat. The majority of wetland loss in southern Ontario occurred decades ago, under different economic development imperatives. OMAFRA will work with partner ministries, such as MNRF and MECP, to explore approaches to further slow the loss of wetlands.

## Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

### ECO Comment

Similarly, while the PPS does not provide an explicit exemption for aggregate extraction, it prioritizes aggregates over other land uses by enabling aggregate sites to be located in or near PSWs...

### MMAH Response

MMAH understands that MNRF previously commented on this statement. MMAH would reiterate MNRF's comment that the PPS is clear that no development or site alteration is permitted within significant wetlands in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E and in significant coastal wetlands (see PPS policy 2.1.4).

## Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

MNRF thanks the ECO for recognizing the significant effort that went into the development of the Wetland Conservation Strategy, by the provincial government, as well as all the people of Ontario that contributed through an engagement session or submitting written comments.

A Wetland Conservation Strategy for Ontario 2017-2030 built on more than three decades of progressive wetland policy and partnerships. It does not rely on any single policy, but recognizes that action under four strategic directions (awareness, knowledge, partnership and conservation) will be required to see a gain in wetland area and function in Southern Ontario. The strategy includes 67 actions in total, and three were prioritized based on the results of broad public engagement: improving Ontario's Wetland Inventory and Mapping, Creating a No Net Loss Policy for Ontario's Wetlands, and Improving the Evaluation of Significant Wetlands. The strategy identified the use of a mitigation compensation hierarchy as a means of ensuring that offsetting is only used as a last resort, and that this hierarchy would be set within a larger framework which could include changes to other provincial policies to prevent loss, or to encourage stewardship, education and outreach.

Wetland protection efforts in Ontario are prioritized to areas where pressure is the greatest. This is why the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS) natural heritage policies for wetlands are strongest in southern and much of central Ontario and along the Great Lakes coast, and why provincial land use plans including the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, provide additional protection for wetlands that go above and beyond the protections afforded by the PPS. Though the PPS is a strong tool for wetland conservation, it is only one of a suite instruments that may be used to restrict certain activities in and around wetlands or facilitate their conservation in different situations. For example, aggregate site rehabilitation can contribute to wetland creation.

MNRF acknowledges that additional clarity needs to be provided to conservation authorities around the scope of activities subject to approval. Amendments were recently made to the Conservation Authorities Act to allow MNRF to update the definition of wetlands contained within the Act and further clarify what conservation authorities are to consider when making permitting decisions. The ministry is currently working with conservation authorities, municipalities, and the regulated community to explore updates to existing regulatory requirements. Other amendments were made to update enforcement powers to align with other pieces of provincial legislation.

## **Volume 4, Chapter 2: Southern Ontario's Disappearing Forests**

### **Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Provincial Policy Statement, led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and issued under the Planning Act, is the government's statement on land use planning in the province. OMAFRA works with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to promote conservation and stewardship of woodlands and other important habitats through the Provincial Policy Statement and other land use policies. OMAFRA also encourages conservation and stewardship by providing best management practices guidance for farmers, such as Best Management Practice booklets on "Establishing Tree Cover" and "Woodlot Management". To support municipal tree conservation efforts, OMAFRA has developed communication materials to raise farmers' awareness about municipal tree by-laws, and encourage them to talk with their municipality about local requirements before removing trees. OMAFRA also has cost-share programs to support fragile land retirement.

### **Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry**

The ministry continues to investigate and develop opportunities to engage and support landowners in sustainable resource management actions to conserve, protect and enhance forest health, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience on private lands in Ontario.

### **MNRF Afforestation and Stewardship Programs**

MNRF provides incentives for afforestation and stewardship through programs such as the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP), Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) and the Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program (LSHRP).

In 2018, more than 17,600 properties participated in the MFTIP, conserving more than 645,000 hectares of forested lands. Participation in the program has more than doubled since its launch in 1998 and continues to increase each year. CLTIP provides eligible landowners with property

tax relief in return for protecting important natural heritage features on their property which can include forested areas (treed swamp wetlands, Niagara Escarpment Natural Areas). The program has more than 22,500 participating properties conserving and protecting over 270,000 hectares of land. MNRF has been working hard internally toward continuous process improvement resulting in ongoing streamlining of processes which benefit clients and increase participation.

LSHRP is a competitive annual funding program that supports on the ground efforts in habitat enhancement and ecological restoration to advance Ontario's biodiversity conservation objectives. Projects result in local actions such as wetland restoration, tree planting, invasive species removal, and planting of pollinator habitat. Since 2013, the LSHRP has funded 112 projects that have helped to improve, restore and create more than 3,016 hectares of habitat including plantings of over 239,800 trees and shrubs, supported the hiring of 360 individuals and leveraged over \$6,160,757 in project-partner funding.

### **MNRF Supports the Protection of Significant Woodlands**

The MNRF advises and works with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in developing the provincial land use policies regarding natural heritage protection, including the protection of significant woodlands. MNRF also provides support to MMAH and municipalities by providing technical guidance to assist planning authorities in implementation of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), which states that significant woodlands are to be identified using criteria established by MNRF.

In 2010 MNRF developed the Natural Heritage Reference Manual to support planning authorities in implementing the natural heritage policies of the PPS and meeting their requirements under the Planning Act. This guide is advisory in nature and intended to be used by ecologists, biologists, environmental planners and others involved in the development of strategies to identify and protect significant woodlands in the municipal planning process.

Municipalities play a key role in managing private land forests through:

- Identification and protection of significant woodlands through the Provincial Policy Statement and Natural Heritage Reference Manual
- Development and implementation of tree cutting by-laws providing direction on forest management
- Establishment of partnerships to implement and deliver stewardship activities

## **Ontario Tree Seed Plant**

The Ontario Tree Seed Plant's purpose was to provide native tree seed to provincially owned nurseries to help replant trees on Crown land which were harvested by the forest industry. Since 1996, the private sector has been providing more than 80 per cent of seed extraction services and 100 per cent of seedling production across all of Ontario. While the plant extracted, stored and tested seed, it did not grow trees, perform genetic testing, carry out scientific research or track the custody of seeds once they left the plant. MNRF recently completed a review of the decision to close the Ontario Tree Seed Plant. While the plant will not re-open, a new transition plan has been approved and is being implemented to ensure the needs and concerns of industry, provincial and local stakeholders are addressed as much as possible.

MNRF's Seed Zones of Ontario policy, referenced in the Forest Operations and Silviculture Manual (2017) as regulated under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, requires forest managers to use appropriate seed and stock as their licence obligations to renew the forest and achieve forest renewal standards are included in forest management plans.

MNRF is updating its Seed Zones of Ontario policy, now called seed transfer policy to ensure Ontario's tree seeds have a high probability of being adapted to their growing environment and produce well-adapted trees now and in the future. This is a critical component of sustaining our forests for the people of Ontario.