

# Ontario Releases Report on Progress in Reducing GHG Emissions



In late Nov. 2016, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) released the Greenhouse Gas Progress Report 2016 as required by the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*. The Annual Report is the Commissioner's independent review of the Ontario government's progress in reducing GHG emissions for 2015-2016.

In the first chapter of this year's report, the ECO reviews the science of climate change, its impacts on the planet and why Ontario must dramatically reduce its GHG emissions. The following chapters report on what Ontario's emissions are now and what the government is doing to reduce them.

Ontario's targets are to reduce provincial GHG emissions by:

- 6% below 1990 levels by 2014;
- 15% below 1990 levels by 2020;
- 37% below 1990 levels by 2030; and
- 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

These targets, while ambitious, are consistent with those of other countries and are amply justified by climate science. According to the official international method of calculation, Ontario met its 2014 target, mostly by closing coal-fired power generating stations. Meeting future targets will be harder, however.

By 2020, Ontario must reduce emissions a further 15 megatonne (Mt) (18.5 Mt compared to business as usual), a bigger and faster reduction than the 12 Mt reduced from 1990 to 2014.

Ontario still depends on fossil fuels for 80% of its energy. Transportation is the biggest challenge and the province's largest and fastest growing share of GHG emissions. Industry, homes and commercial buildings are other major emitters.

Ontario is joining a worldwide movement to put a price on GHG pollution. The new *Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016*, creates a cap-and-trade program that covers 82% of Ontario's direct emissions. The first compliance period began Jan. 1, 2017, and is to be linked with California and Qu bec in 2018.

But the cap-and-trade program alone is predicted to provide only 2.8 Mt of the 18.5 GHG reductions needed to meet the 2020 GHG target. The government estimates that 9.8 Mt of additional reductions will come from its Climate Change Action Plan.

The ECO has recommendations to ensure that Ontario meets its GHG emissions and climate change goals, including recommending that the government:

- Report regularly to Ontarians on the province's entire climate change footprint, not only on Ontario's direct GHG emissions as calculated pursuant to international guidelines
- Give a higher priority to reducing Ontario's methane and black carbon emissions
- Be more transparent about which entities are receiving free allowances under the cap-and-trade program and why
- Follow the UK example and set legally binding carbon budgets well in advance, within which a cap-and-trade program would operate
- Prioritize the approval of offset protocols to enable the creation of a timely and ample supply of high-quality Ontario offsets
- Use the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account only to pay for new or expanded initiatives that will directly produce emission reductions on top of those that will be created by existing programs, the cap-and-trade program and initiatives already funded through the Account
- Do more to discourage, and to make unnecessary, travel by petroleum-fueled vehicles
- Prioritize funding for projects and transit that support dense, complete communities
- Ensure that government support for clean tech from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account has a direct, substantial and transparent connection to additional GHG reductions
- Reduce approval and procurement barriers to the use of low-carbon clean tech innovations within Ontario.