

Province of Ontario

2020 Water Conservation and Efficiency Program Assessment

1. Lead agency and contact person:

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2. Status of goals and objectives

In 2012 Ontario adopted water conservation and efficiency goals and objectives that are consistent with the Basin-wide goals and objectives. The goals and objectives were developed based on stakeholder consultation, Indigenous engagement, and public comments received.

Ontario adopted the water conservation and efficiency goals as set out in the Agreement, and developed objectives consistent with the regional objectives adopted for the Basin that are tailored for Ontario to reflect the direction in the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, 2010, and to address stakeholder and Indigenous community requests to emphasize the importance of taking ecological water needs into account in decision making, in keeping with the broader ecosystem protection and restoration goals of the Agreement.

Ontario's water conservation goals and objectives are available at:

<http://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/ontarios-water-conservation-and-efficiencygoals-objectives-and-programs>

3. Water conservation and efficiency program overview

Ontario's water conservation and efficiency program consists of a wide variety of statutes, programs and policies administered across several Ontario ministries, as well as local governments and other organizations.

The foundation of the program is the *Ontario Water Resources Act* and the *Water Taking and Transfer Regulation* (Ontario Regulation 387/04). The purpose of the *Ontario Water Resources Act* (OWRA) is to provide for the conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and for their efficient and sustainable use, in order to promote Ontario's long-term environmental, social and economic well-being.

Section 34.1 (9)(h) of the OWRA provides a permitting Director with authority to set terms and conditions on a permit governing the use and conservation of water taken under the permit, including requiring the holder to implement specified measures to promote the efficient use of the water or reduce the loss of water through consumptive use, conduct a water audit, and to prepare and implement a water conservation plan. In addition, section 76(1)(b.1) of the OWRA provides regulation making authority requiring the taking of measures by permit and non-permit holders to promote the conservation of water, including the preparation and implementation of water conservation plans and other measures to promote the efficient use of water or reduce the loss of water through consumptive use.

The *Water Taking and Transfer Regulation* outlines matters that the Director must consider when considering an application for a Permit to Take Water. Section 4(2).3.i. of the

Regulation requires that the Director consider issues relating to the use of water, including whether water conservation measures are being implemented or are proposed to be implemented in the use of water, in accordance with best water management standards and practices for the relevant sector if these are available.

Provincial land use planning statutes such as the *Planning Act*, policies such as the *Provincial Policy Statement, 2020* and plans such as the *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* set out policy direction relating to water conservation in new development. Section 3 of the *Planning Act* requires land use decisions to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement policies and to conform to provincial plans. The *Clean Water Act* requires that any significant threats to municipal drinking water sources from a water quantity perspective be identified through the preparation of water budgets and addressed in local source protection plans, such as through policies on water conservation.

The *Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, 2010* is an important component of Ontario’s water conservation and efficiency program builds upon Ontario’s expertise in clean water technology and sets out a framework to make the province a continental leader in water innovation to help address global water challenges. Among other things, the Act sets the framework to encourage Ontarians to use water more efficiently by creating and implementing innovative approaches to protecting and conserving water resources for current and future generations.

4. Consistency with Regional Objectives

Ontario’s program is consistent with the regional objectives in the promotion of environmentally sound and economically feasible water conservation measures.

REGIONAL OBJECTIVE	LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM SUMMARIES
1) Guide programs toward long-term sustainable water use and management.	<p>Ontario implements a range of adaptive programs and conservation and efficiency strategies that consider long-term sustainable water use, taking into account the importance of water to related ecosystems. Implementation occurs through the assessment of water taking applications under the <i>Ontario Water Resources Act</i> and the preparation of source protection plans under the <i>Clean Water Act</i> to protect existing and future sources of drinking water in terms of both water quantity and quality, development of water budgets to estimate surface and groundwater supplies, water use and water quantity risk assessments, and action to protect the Great Lakes.</p> <p>The Made in Ontario Environment Plan was released in 2018 to help protect our air, land and water, address litter and reduce waste, protect land and greenspaces, and support Ontarians to continue to do their share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and help communities and families prepare for climate change. Ontario continues to implement the commitments in this plan.</p>

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	<p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/made-in-ontario-environment-plan</p> <p>Under Ontario's <i>Conservation Authorities Act</i>, conservation authorities support and contribute to Ontario's water conservation and efficiency goals through their programs and services related to natural hazard management, conservation and management of lands owned by conservation authorities, and through their legislative responsibilities under the <i>Clean Water Act</i>.</p> <p>2020 update - Ontario Water Resources Act and Regulations</p> <p>The province has completed a review of the state of water resources in key areas of Ontario and the effect water takings have on these resources. This included reviewing water quantity-related policies and programs as they apply to water takers, including water bottlers taking groundwater, as well as enhancing our understanding of how we can manage water takings to ensure we have sustainable water resources in the face of changing climate and continued population growth.</p> <p>To help ensure we continue to conserve and manage water resources for future generations, and building on the province's water quantity management review, the province publicly engaged on proposed enhancements to Ontario's water taking program in summer and fall 2020, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving host municipalities more direct input on allowing bottled water companies to withdraw new or increased amounts of groundwater in their communities; • Establishing priorities of water use in the province that can guide water taking decisions; • Assessing and managing multiple water takings together in areas of the province where water sustainability is a concern; and • Making water taking data available to the public to increase transparency of how Ontario manages water resources. <p>More information on proposed enhancements to Ontario's water taking program can be found on the Environmental Registry of Ontario at:</p> <p>Proposal for Updating Ontario's Water Quantity Management Framework: https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1340</p> <p>Proposal to require municipal support for new or increased bottled water takings: https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-2422</p>

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	<p>The <u><i>Taking Ground Water to Produce Bottled Water Regulation (Ontario Regulation 463/16)</i></u> established a moratorium on new or increased permits for groundwater by water bottling facilities in Ontario. The province extended this moratorium to April 1, 2021, to allow time to thoroughly review and consider feedback received on proposed enhancements to Ontario’s water taking program, as well as to further engage with the public, stakeholders and Indigenous communities on how to implement those proposed enhancements before the moratorium ends. This way, we can be confident our programs, policies and science protect vital water resources while keeping Ontario open for business. Our proposal to extend the moratorium was made available for comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario from August 28 to September 27, 2020 and can be viewed at <u>https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-2319</u>.</p>
<p>2) Adopt and implement supply and demand management to promote efficient use and conservation of water resources.</p>	<p>Ontario has a range of programs that manage water supply and demand to achieve efficient use and conservation of water resources such as establishing water efficiency standards in Ontario’s Building Code and <i>Electricity Act</i>.</p> <p>Under the <i>Planning Act</i>, the Ontario Government issues policy statements which local planning authorities and other land use decision-makers must be consistent with as they make land use decisions. Ontario’s <i>Provincial Policy Statement, 2020</i> requires local planning authorities to protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by, among other things “planning for efficient and sustainable use of water resources, through practices for water conservation and sustaining water quality”. Provincial plans also require water conservation plans and promote green infrastructure in municipal stormwater management by municipalities in the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Simcoe areas.</p>
<p>3) Improve monitoring and standardize data reporting among State and Provincial water conservation and efficiency programs.</p>	<p>In addition to water reporting requirements under Ontario’s Permit to Take Water program, a range of Ontario programs and initiatives support improved monitoring and standardized data reporting related to water supply, water use and conservation/efficiency. This includes Ontario Surface Water Monitoring and Low Water Response, the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network, management of Ontario’s foundation geospatial datasets and analysis to support decisions about water resources, and the Ontario Geological Survey’s Groundwater Initiative.</p>

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4) Develop science, technology and research.	Ontario has a number of agencies, organizations, programs and strategies that promote and cultivate science, technology and research to implement the best in water, wastewater and stormwater technology, and support innovation and adoption of water conservation approaches. These include the Ontario Clean Water Agency, Investment Accelerator Fund, Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance and the Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative.
5) Develop education programs and information sharing for all water users.	Ontario is implementing a range of education programs and other programs that raise awareness of the importance of water and the value of conservation, efficiency and cost-saving, and which promote the sharing of best management practices, including: the Walkerton Clean Water Centre which fosters leading-edge drinking water technologies and delivers education, information and advice to drinking water operators across Ontario on issues including water conservation; water efficiency labelling through partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Water Sense Program; as well as funding support and environmental planning programs for water conservation and efficiency in the agricultural sector.
Other programs:	<p>In accordance with Ontario’s water conservation and efficiency goals, objectives, the provinces water conservation and efficiency program includes a range of environmental and resource management legislation, strategies and programs that aligns with these objectives by integrating water conservation and efficient water use with other environmental management practices and considerations such as energy use, climate change, and the protection and restoration of hydrological and ecological integrity. This includes <i>Ontario’s Great Lakes Protection Act</i> and Great Lakes Strategy, Ontario Parks Water Conservation Initiatives, the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, the Great Lakes Local Action Fund, as well as various fisheries, biodiversity, habitat, nutrients and wetlands related initiatives.</p> <p>2020 Update - Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health</p> <p>COA is the principal mechanism through which Ontario and Canada coordinate their work to address their respective and shared commitments to restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes. Ontario and Canada began negotiating a new COA in the spring of 2019 and on July 5, 2019 a draft new COA was posted to Ontario’s Environmental Registry for a 61-day public comment period (closed Sept. 4, 2019). ECCC concurrently posted the</p>

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	<p>draft new COA to the Canada Gazette Registry for public comment.</p> <p>The draft new COA builds on the successes of the 2014-2019 COA and addresses Ontario's Great Lakes priorities, including improving municipal wastewater and stormwater management, reducing excess algae, addressing plastic pollution, improving climate resilience, reducing salt entering waterways and undertaking meaningful local action.</p> <p>Ontario and Canada are working towards finalizing the new COA in the near future.</p> <p>www.ontario.ca/page/canada-ontario-great-lakes-agreement</p> <p>2020 Update – Great Lakes Local Action Fund On September 24th, 2020, the Ontario Government launched the new Great Lakes Local Action Fund, which was open for applications until November 6th, 2020. The fund will provide up to \$50,000 for innovative projects led by community-based organizations, small businesses, municipalities, conservation authorities, and Indigenous communities to protect and restore coastal, shoreline and nearshore areas of the Great Lakes. Projects that contribute to Great Lakes protection and restoration could lead to improved water quality and ecosystem health, which could also help to achieve water conservation and efficiency goals.</p>

5. Ontario’s water conservation and efficiency program implementation timeline and status

Ontario’s water conservation and efficiency program is in place and being implemented.