

## **Ontario Government Releases New Environment Plan for Consultation**

The Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks has released Ontario's new [Environment Plan](#) for a 60-day consultation on the Environmental Registry. The new plan, a broad and wide-ranging framework for action on land, air and water quality across the province sets out new climate change action and climate resilience targets for the province. The government will conduct more focused consultations on individual plan objectives and actions in 2019. This update provides municipal officials with an overview of the plan's main objectives and possible actions that could affect municipal governments. AMO will be reviewing the plan in detail and responding to the government through the consultations.

Through today's announcement, the government proposes to revise Ontario's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target by 30 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030. This target is aligned with reductions under the United Nations Paris Accord but allows greater emissions than the current target adopted by the previous government. The Province re-commits to investing \$5 billion additional funding in transit across Ontario and to working with federal and municipal governments to invest the \$7 billion Green Infrastructure stream in the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan in areas such as transit, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

The new strategy is separated into four main categories containing a wide range of proposed actions. Depending upon local needs and circumstances, municipal governments could be affected a number of initiatives. The four parts of the proposed plan are:

### **Addressing Climate Change**

- Actions to increase climate resilience for people and communities include:
  - Carrying out a provincial climate impact assessment including vulnerability for key sectors such as energy, transport, water and agriculture;
  - Providing better information tools to homeowners to understand and take action to protect against climate change impacts;
  - Helping communities apply climate science in decision making to improve resilience;

- Modernizing the Ontario Building Code to protect new buildings and homes against extreme weather;
  - Reviewing the Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance program to incorporate climate resilience upgrades to damaged infrastructure; and
  - Review land use planning policies for climate resilience and helping communities adapt to changing weather conditions and improve stormwater management.
- This section also lays out actions to reduce GHG emissions by 30 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030 in line with the Paris Accord by:
    - Regulating Ontario's largest emitters to reduce GHGs. The regulated standards will include an assessment of trade-exposed industries and allow appropriate exemptions;
    - Create a four year \$400 million Ontario Carbon Trust fund to help pay for innovative technologies and GHG reductions;
    - The Ontario Carbon Trust could be combined with the \$420 million federal Low Carbon Leadership Fund allowing up to \$820 million to provide incentives to reduce carbon emissions;
    - Conserving energy and water in homes and buildings through better information on energy and water consumption
      - Expand the "Green Button" initiative for electricity and natural gas and voluntary support for water utilities;
      - Encourage the display of home energy information on real estate listings;
      - Increase renewable content in gasoline to 15 per cent by 2025;
      - Require natural gas utilities to offer voluntary renewable natural gas options for consumers;
      - Support smart grid and energy storage technologies;
      - Work with municipal governments to develop climate and energy plan initiatives to support climate resilience and low carbon transformation; and

- Remove regulatory barriers to private sector low carbon refueling and compressed natural gas stations for trucks.

## **Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities and Keeping our Land and Soil Clean**

- Commitment to move Ontario's existing waste diversion programs to full producer responsibility to provide relief for taxpayers and make producers of packaging and products more efficient by better connecting them with the markets that recycle what they produce;
- Provide municipal governments and the communities they represent with say in landfill siting approvals;
- Cut regulatory red tape and modernize environmental approvals to support sustainable end markets for waste and new infrastructure;
- Expansion of green bin collection systems in large cities and relevant businesses;
- Develop a proposal to ban food waste from landfill;
- Reduce plastic waste through development of a national strategy; seeking federal commitment to implement standards that address recyclability and labelling for plastic products and packaging and ensuring the Great Lakes and other inland waters are included in international agreements that deal with plastic waste in the environment;
- Provide clear rules for compostable products and packaging by working with municipal governments and private composting facilities to build a consensus around requirements for emerging compostable materials and consider making producers responsible for the end of life management of these materials;
- Establish an official day focused on cleanup of litter across Ontario;
- Explore opportunities to recover the value of resources in waste through chemical recycling or thermal treatment;
- Work with municipal governments and producers to provide more consistency across the province regarding what items can and cannot be accepted in the Blue Box;

- Revise Brownfields regulation and record of site condition to reduce barriers to redevelop contaminated lands;
- Make it easier to reuse excess soils;
- Work with municipalities to reduce illegal dumping, including of excess soils; and
- Improve management of hauled sewage.

### **Protecting Our Air, Lakes and Rivers**

- Local air quality monitoring and action plans to address regional concerns;
- Reducing road salt infiltrating Ontario's lakes and rivers through best management practices and reducing phosphorous;
- Increasing transparency of monitoring and reporting of sewage overflows from municipal wastewater systems and considering improvements to stormwater and wastewater financing and investment;
- Action on invasive species;
- Addressing water taking policies to protect groundwater and prioritizing uses; and
- Increasing water use tracking and reporting.

### **Conserving Land and Greenspace**

- Work with municipal governments and communities to ensure Conservation Authorities focus on protecting people and property from flooding;
- Modernize Environmental Assessments (EA) to avoid duplications, streamline and reduce delays while better recognizing other planning processes

Municipal officials are encouraged to review the plan for individual impacts and opportunities in their government operations. Members may wish to provide their comments directly on the province's new [Environment Plan](#) through the EBR by January 28, 2019. AMO will be assessing the areas of the plan in greater detail and will report to members on any significant developments.