

Province of Ontario

2021 Water Conservation and Efficiency Program Assessment

1. Lead agency and contact person:

Jennifer Keyes, Director
Resources Planning and Development Policy Branch
Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural
Resources and Forestry

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:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-water-conservation-and-efficiency-goals-objectives-and-programs-accordance-great-lakes-st>

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. Under the OWRA, a permit is required to withdraw more than 50,000 litres per day of ground or surface water, with a few exceptions.

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.

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, 2006* 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 that 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
<p>1) Guide programs toward long-term sustainable water use and management.</p>	<p>Ontario implements a range of adaptive programs and conservation and efficiency strategies that consider long-term sustainable water use and account for the importance of water to related ecosystems. Implementation occurs through the issuance of water taking permits under the <i>Ontario Water Resources Act</i> and the preparation of source protection plans under the <i>Clean Water Act, 2006</i> to protect existing and future drinking water sources by identifying at risk systems and developing policies directing agencies to take actions that address water quantity risks, and actions to protect the Great Lakes.</p> <p>Ontario made a commitment in 2018 to help protect our air, land and water, prevent and reduce litter and waste, support Ontarians to continue to do their share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and help communities and families prepare for climate change.</p> <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</p>

REGIONAL OBJECTIVE	LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM SUMMARIES
	<p>lands owned by conservation authorities, and through their legislative responsibilities under the <i>Clean Water Act</i>.</p> <p>2021 update - Ontario Water Resources Act and Regulations</p> <p>Ontario has made changes to the province’s water taking program as part of its commitment to ensure water resources in the province are protected, now and for future generations. The changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving municipalities more say on whether water bottling companies can use groundwater in their areas; • establishing priorities on how water should be shared among water users when there are competing demands for water, for example during drought; • putting in place a new, more flexible approach for the ministry and water users to better assess and manage multiple water takings in areas 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>The new rules came into effect on April 1, 2021, coinciding with the end of a moratorium on new or increased permits for groundwater by water bottling facilities in Ontario. The changes were informed by an assessment of the state of water resources in select areas of Ontario and the effect water takings have on these resources, as well as a review of the province’s water taking policies, programs, and science tools.</p> <p>https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1340</p> <p>To support the new changes, the province has provided new guidance on managing water takings in areas where water sustainability is a concern and where there are competing demands for water.</p> <p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/guidance-support-area-based-water-quantity-management</p> <p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/guidance-support-priorities-water-use</p> <p>More information on the recent enhancements to Ontario’s water taking program can be found on the Environmental Registry of Ontario at:</p> <p>Updating Ontario’s Water Quantity Management Framework: https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1340</p> <p>Municipal support for new or increased bottled water takings: https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-2422</p>

REGIONAL OBJECTIVE	LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM SUMMARIES
<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> for products or facilities using both energy and water.</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.</p>
<p>3) Improve monitoring and standardize data reporting among State and Provincial water conservation and efficiency programs.</p>	<p>Water takers who have a permit under the <i>Ontario Water Resources Act</i> are required to monitor their daily water takings and report their data annually to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.</p> <p>In addition, 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. The Large Building Energy and Water Reporting and Benchmarking program requires commercial, multi-unit residential and some industrial buildings that are 100,000 square feet or larger to annually report their energy and water consumption and Greenhouse Gas emissions to the Ministry of Energy. In 2023 this program will extend to buildings 50, 000 square feet or larger.</p>
<p>4) Develop science, technology and research.</p>	<p>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: Ontario Clean Water Agency, Investment Accelerator Fund and, Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.</p> <p>2021 Update – Investment Accelerator Fund</p>

REGIONAL OBJECTIVE	LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM SUMMARIES
	<p>A new seed-stage fund known as Graphite Investment Accelerator Fund IV was launched in fall 2021 to provide additional venture capital support for early-stage Ontario technology companies- including cleantech and water technology companies. This private, \$100M fund is expected to provide up to \$4.5 million in venture capital support to rapidly amplify the growth of early-stage technology companies.</p>
<p>5) Develop education programs and information sharing for all water users.</p>	<p>Ontario is implementing a range of education initiatives 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 information on 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.</p> <p>2021 Update – Walkerton Clean Water Centre</p> <p>The Centre currently offers content on water conservation as part of the Mandatory Certificate Renewal Course (2021-2023), which must be completed by all drinking water operators and water quality analysts to renew their certificates. The course provides participants with key concepts involved in the development of water conservation plans.</p>
<p>Other programs:</p>	<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 the <i>Great Lakes Protection Act</i> and Ontario’s Great Lakes Strategy, Ontario Parks Water Conservation Initiatives, the 2021 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>

REGIONAL OBJECTIVE	LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM SUMMARIES
	<p>2021 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. In 2021, Ontario and Canada signed the ninth COA, effective from June 1, 2021 until May 31, 2026. This Agreement marks 50 years of collaborative Great Lakes work between both governments since the first COA was signed in 1971.</p> <p>The 2021 COA continues to build on Great Lakes restoration progress. Commitments in the 2021 COA will advance new and ongoing actions to address a number of key areas, such as preventing toxic and nuisance algae, improving wastewater and stormwater management, reducing plastic pollution and excess road salt, restoring native species and habitats, and increasing resilience to climate change.</p> <p>The 2021 COA incorporates feedback received from engagement with the public, First Nations, Métis and the broader Great Lakes community.</p> <p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/canada-ontario-great-lakes-agreement</p> <p>2021 Update – Ontario’s Great Lakes Strategy</p> <p>The <i>Great Lakes Protection Act (GLPA), 2015</i> strengthens the province’s ability to restore and protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, as well as the waterways that flow into them. Ontario’s Great Lakes Strategy was first released in 2012. The GLPA requires Ontario to report on progress made under Ontario’s Great Lakes Strategy every three years. The first report on Progress was released in 2016. Ontario is also required to undertake a review of its Great Lakes Strategy every six years. A review of the Great Lakes Strategy is currently underway. The ministry is also working on the second progress report on the 2012 Great Lakes Strategy, which is expected to be released in the coming months.</p> <p>In preparing a renewed Great Lakes Strategy, Ontario is engaging the Great Lakes community to gather input on priorities to further the environmental, social, and economic health and well-being of the Great Lakes basin for present and future generations.</p> <p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-great-lakes-strategy https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-great-lakes-strategy-2016-progress-report</p>

REGIONAL OBJECTIVE	LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM SUMMARIES
	<p>2021 Update – Great Lakes Local Action Fund</p> <p>In 2020 the Ontario Government launched the new Great Lakes Local Action Fund. The fund provided 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 and their connecting rivers and streams. In the first round, the Ontario government selected 44 community-based projects to receive \$1.9 million in funding. Projects that contribute to Great Lakes protection and restoration support improved water quality and ecosystem health, which could also help to achieve water conservation and efficiency goals. Ontario is preparing to launch a second round of the Great Lakes Local Action Fund.</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.