



Gord Miller, B.Sc, M.Sc.  
Commissioner

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Commissaire

## *Conservation First Needs More Work*

Toronto, 13 Jan. 2015 – Ontario's Environmental Commissioner says he's adopting a wait-and-see attitude towards the government's *Conservation First* philosophy.

In releasing his 2014 Energy Conservation Progress Report "*Planning to Conserve*", Gord Miller praised the shift to considering cost-effective conservation before building new generation or transmission facilities. "Conservation has long been undervalued, and last year the government made significant progress in changing that by reorienting its energy policy."

Miller pointed to a number of positive changes in conservation policy:

- The government adopted a new Long-Term Energy Plan that put *Conservation First*.
- It began work on a new conservation framework for electricity utilities, and set a new goal for their reduction in consumption: 7 terawatt-hours by 2020.
- The Ontario Energy Board established a new conservation framework for natural gas distributors.
- Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator is adding in environmental benefits, like the cost of carbon, when doing its cost-benefit test to approve electricity conservation programs. The Ontario Energy Board has announced it will do the same thing for natural gas conservation programs.

"These are all good improvements and will help the government put flesh on the bones of its *Conservation First* philosophy," says Miller. "But I have to point out a couple of developments that give me pause, and hold me back from an unqualified endorsement of the government's new conservation policy.

- The vast majority of local electricity distribution utilities will miss their target for peak reduction. About half are expected to miss their target for reducing overall consumption.
- The government has eliminated all of the interim electricity conservation targets that were used to measure the progress towards meeting its overall goals.

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- The Conservation First philosophy is not backed up with legal authority, as was done with previous power system plan directives.
- The government has reduced the involvement of the public in reducing peak electricity demand.

"The government has spent the last decade trying to encourage the public to adopt a "Culture of Conservation", says the Environmental Commissioner. "Now, with its new approach to peak demand reduction, it appears to have forgotten that effort. A recent study shows that public interest and engagement in conservation in Ontario has hit an all-time low. That should concern all of us in the long run."

Download the Environmental Commissioner's full Energy Conservation Progress Report for 2014, "*Planning to Conserve*" at [eco.on.ca](http://eco.on.ca).

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*The **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario** is the province's independent environmental watchdog. Appointed by the Legislative Assembly, the ECO monitors and reports on compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights, the government's progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and its actions towards achieving greater energy conservation in Ontario.*