



Dianne Saxe, J.D., Ph.D. in Law
Commissioner

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Commissaire

Fossil fuel conservation would fight climate change while saving Ontarians billions

Increasing conservation would net broad environmental, health and economic benefits

TORONTO March 27, 2019 – The Ontario government is increasing energy bills, air pollution, health impacts and greenhouse gas emissions by creating conditions that push up fossil fuel use, says the last report from Dianne Saxe, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. **A Healthy, Happy, Prosperous Ontario: Why we need more energy conservation**, Saxe's 2019 Energy Conservation Progress Report, shows the many benefits to people, to the climate and to our economy from energy conservation that reduces fossil fuel use.

Ontario's economy relies on fossil fuels for 75 per cent of its energy, mostly natural gas for heating, and gasoline and diesel for transportation. That reliance comes with a hefty health, economic and environmental price tag. From 2010 to 2015, Ontario spent about \$16.8 to \$24 billion every year to import fossil fuels like oil, petroleum products and natural gas. Burning those fuels pollutes our air, harms human health and worsens climate change. Much of the fuel is wasted.

"If we were even 10 per cent more efficient, Ontarians could save from \$1.6 to \$2 billion every year," said Saxe. Cost-effective energy conservation using existing technology would cut consumers' and businesses' energy by up to 30 per cent.

Together, electricity and natural gas conservation could keep costs down and meet the government's target of cutting climate pollution by 3.2 megatonnes of greenhouse gases. Ontario has surplus electricity only part of the time, and that surplus will largely disappear when the Pickering nuclear plant closes by 2024.

On our largest energy source, transportation fuels, poor land-use planning is driving up gasoline and diesel use and trapping families in distant suburbs with no real alternative to long, congested commutes. The Greater Golden Horseshoe expects to welcome 4 million more people by 2040, but proposed changes to its Growth Plan would push growth into exactly the wrong places – new low-density, high-tax suburbs far from jobs, retail, schools and transit. This would funnel many more people onto already congested roads, driving up costs and fossil fuel use.

A government that followed best practices would focus growth in existing communities with good access to jobs, transit and other amenities. Many have room to add reasonably priced housing that is neither tall nor sprawl. People who live in complete communities don't need to spend hours every day driving. They can instead save energy, money, and time in traffic, while reducing climate and air pollution.

"Individuals and municipalities can do a lot, but provincial rules drive energy use. Today's poor decisions and missed opportunities will have a huge impact on Ontarians now and well into the future. Long-term thinking could put us on a path to a cleaner environment, a survivable climate and the health and prosperity that come with it," said Saxe. "Right now, we're heading in the wrong direction."

A Healthy, Happy, Prosperous Ontario: Why we need more energy conservation
can be downloaded at: eco.on.ca/reports/2019-why-energy-conservation

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For more information or to schedule interviews, please contact:

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*The **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario** is an independent officer of the Legislature who reports on government progress on environmental protection, climate change and energy conservation. The ECO is the province's environmental watchdog and guardian of Ontarians' environmental rights.*