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ONTARIO TAKES ACTION ON CLEAN AIR AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change, smog and transboundary air pollution are a real threat to the health of all Ontarians. The sources of air pollution and greenhouse gases (GHGs) are often the same, as are their solutions. The McGuinty government is acting on numerous commitments to reduce emissions for both smog and GHGs that will help clean Ontario's air, improve the health of its citizens, and contribute to the sustainability of the environment.

EFFECTS OF AIR POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Health and environmental impacts due to air pollution are well documented. Recent reports estimate that over 29 million minor illnesses, 59,000 emergency room visits, 16,000 hospital admissions, and more than 5,800 premature deaths were caused by smog in 2005 in Ontario. If the current trend continues, these figures could rise to over 31 million minor illnesses, 71,000 emergency room visits, 20,000 hospital admissions, and 7,000 premature deaths by 2015. It is estimated that environmental, health-care and societal costs to Ontario are currently \$9.6 billion annually.

Human activities are altering the chemical composition of the atmosphere through the rapid build up of climate change emissions – primarily carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the ambient atmosphere are increasing at a rate not experienced for millions of years, according to ice core samples and other scientific studies. Some of the negative impacts of climate change include more frequent and severe weather events (e.g. storms and droughts), a drop in Great Lakes water levels and increasing incidence of hot-weather related health problems.

ONTARIO'S EMISSIONS TRACK RECORD

Ontario comprises 39 per cent of Canada's total population and produces 39 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP), but generates 28 per cent of the total national GHG emissions. Ontario's GHG emissions per capita and per GDP are amongst the lowest for any Canadian province or territory. From 1990 to 2003, Ontario grew both in economic activity and population, but its GHG emissions intensity per capita and per gross domestic product decreased. Ontario's GDP grew 74 per cent while greenhouse gas emissions grew only 16 per cent.

From 1990 to 2005¹, Ontario's emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, the precursors of acid rain and smog, decreased by 45 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively.

¹ 2005 sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides data are based on federal-provincial government projections

ONTARIO'S CLEAN AIR AND CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATED APPROACH

The Ontario government has an integrated approach for addressing clean air and climate change issues. The issues are complex and closely connected with each other, therefore actions taken on one issue must be closely coordinated with actions taken on the others. Ontario's integrated approach for clean air and climate change has all the elements necessary for success:

Leadership: *The Ontario government is committed to leading by example.*

- Establishing an annual Shared Air Summit which had its inaugural launch in June 2005, a new forum to bring together environmental, health, government and corporate leaders from around the world to build a strategy on how to reduce the impacts of air pollution through innovation.
- The Ontario government is reducing its own electricity consumption by 10 per cent by 2007. Ontario already has programs in place or underway that will meet two thirds of this target, through innovations like Deep Lake Water Cooling, extensive energy retrofits across the government's real estate portfolio, and engaging the Province's 62,000 employees in energy conservation initiatives.

Clean Energy: *Ontario is shifting to cleaner and renewable sources of power that have fewer environmental impacts.*

- Ontario remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of energy. Ontario's new energy plan achieves a healthy balance by moving away from coal in favour of conservation and greener forms of energy.
- The government has set targets that will double the installed capacity of renewable energy sources to 15,700 megawatts (MW) by 2025.
- The government is also in the process of negotiating new agreements to obtain supplies of clean hydroelectric power from Manitoba and Québec.

Energy Conservation: *Ontario is actively building a culture of conservation.*

- Ontario has set targets that will achieve a total of 6,300 MW of electricity demand reduction through conservation by 2025. Of this, 2,700 MW of savings are to be realized by 2010, including a government target to reduce peak electricity demand by five per cent in 2007.
- The government established the Conservation Bureau to lead the province's efforts to build a culture of conservation and energy efficiency. The Bureau has already been directed by the government to implement programs that will achieve up to 1,300 MW of annual savings by 2010.
- Bill 21, the *Energy Conservation Responsibility Act*, was passed in February 2006. This legislation allows the government to require, for example, public and broader public sector organizations to prepare energy conservation plans and engage in regular reporting on progress. It also facilitates the implementation of smart metering for residential and small

business consumers across the province, an initiative that will allow owners to manage their energy costs.

Transportation and Fuels: *Investing in cleaner forms of transportation and cleaner fuels is a priority.*

- Through the gas tax funding program, Ontario is delivering more than \$1.4 billion over five years to municipalities across the province to improve their public transit systems and increase ridership.
- New regulation requiring an annual average of five per cent ethanol-in-gasoline beginning in 2007, will reduce 800,000 tonnes of GHG emissions annually.

Land Use and Natural Resource Protection: *Ontario is committed to working with municipalities and others on ways to protect our natural resources, forests, farmlands and green spaces – resources which help to capture and store climate-altering carbon dioxide, and filter emissions of air pollutants.*

- The Greenbelt Act, 2005, protects approximately 1.8 million acres of environmentally-sensitive and agricultural land from urban development and sprawl.
- The Places to Grow Act, 2005, allows Ontario to take a coordinated approach to planning for population and economic growth while protecting the environment, agricultural lands and other natural resources.

Industry Emissions Reduction: *Partnerships with business and industry will ensure new technologies and processes are implemented to reduce emissions while keeping Ontario's economy strong.*

- In 2005, the government introduced new standards for 40 pollutants to protect Ontario communities from the impacts of air pollution, the largest update in over 25 years. The government will also review and determine standards for 15 new toxins. The government also implemented the Industry Emission Reduction Plan, establishing new emissions caps for industrial pollution sources in Ontario.
- In January 2005, the government signed the Canada-Steel Sector memorandum of understanding, agreeing to cooperate with government and industry plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Education and Awareness: *Investing in science and heightened awareness will improve our knowledge base and help us make better decisions in our personal, family and work lives.*

- Supporting the efforts of groups that promote individual and community action on climate change.
- The Ministry of the Environment's web site (www.ene.gov.on.ca) provides information to all interested parties about Ontario's air pollution and climate change initiatives, fostering awareness of climate change and other environmental issues.

- The Ministry of Energy and Conservation Bureau websites provide information to consumers on how to conserve energy, which helps to reduce costs and protect the environment.

Research and Innovation: *New technologies are the cornerstone of how air pollution and climate change will be mitigated and avoided.*

- Ontario's has established a new Centre of Excellence for Energy to further the government's innovation agenda by encouraging research and development into leading-edge and emerging energy sources and technology.
- Ontario has launched a new fuel cell innovation program to spur research and development in the province.

Adaptation: *Recognizing the new realities imposed by climate change, including increased incidence of hot weather-related problems such as heat stress and poor air quality, requires identifying and using effective adaptive strategies to reduce vulnerability.*

- Working with other agencies and organizations will help ensure that communities around the Great Lakes successfully manage the impacts of climate change.
- The Ontario government has created an award-winning series of interactive posters, work books, calendars, and other materials focused on understanding, mitigating, and adapting to climate change.

For more information on what Ontario is doing in the fight against poor air quality, transboundary air pollution and climate change, and what you can do to help, please log on to www.ene.gov.on.ca.

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