



Ontario has once-in-a-generation opportunity to reduce the energy and climate footprint of municipal water use

Water and wastewater systems account for almost 40% of reported municipal energy use in the province

Toronto, May 30, 2017 – Ontario's municipal water and wastewater systems use unnecessarily large amounts of energy. Thankfully, there is a huge opportunity to reduce the energy and greenhouse gas footprint of delivering these services to residents. That was the message delivered today by Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO), at the release of her new report, *Every Drop Counts: Reducing the Energy and Climate Footprint of Ontario's Water Use*.

Every Drop Counts, Volume One of the ECO's Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report, looks at the energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, impact on fresh water, and financial costs of operating Ontario's municipal water and wastewater systems. Although these systems are often a municipality's largest energy users, energy efficiency has not historically been a priority.

With federal, provincial and municipal governments all planning major investments in water infrastructure renewal in the coming years, the time to rethink how these systems work is now. The report recommends that the Ontario government require municipalities to find and implement solutions that reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in water and wastewater infrastructure projects that are supported by provincial funding. "If long-term energy costs are included in these infrastructure decisions, and if the money is spent wisely, Ontario municipalities have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to cut the energy costs and environmental footprints of these systems," stated Saxe.

Municipalities spend roughly \$260 million every year in energy costs to operate water and wastewater systems, and unless action is taken, this cost is likely to rise. *Every Drop Counts* identifies solutions for municipalities and the province, such as: addressing leaks of treated drinking water (as high as 40% in some communities), using more efficient pumps, adopting high-efficiency water fixtures, shifting the timing of electricity use, and targeting summer outdoor water use.

The report also examines the related opportunity for municipal wastewater plants to become renewable energy centres. Producing low-carbon energy from sewage combined with food waste can generate energy for heating, electricity and transportation. In Ontario, municipalities including Hamilton, London, Stratford and Simcoe County, as well as the Toronto Zoo, are already taking steps to harness the energy of these wasted resources.

"I hope that this report and its recommendations help the Ontario government and municipalities shine a brighter spotlight on energy efficiency and cost-saving opportunities for municipal water and wastewater systems," concluded Saxe.

Every Drop Counts: Reducing the Energy and Climate Footprint of Ontario's Water Use can be downloaded at eco.on.ca.

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