

**Statement of Environmental Values (SEV)**  
**Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Ontario *Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Act* was proclaimed in February 1994. The founding principles of the *EBR* are stated in its preamble:

- *The people of Ontario recognize the inherent value of the natural environment.*
- *The people of Ontario have a right to a healthful environment.*
- *The people of Ontario have as a common goal the protection, conservation and restoration of the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations.*
- While the government has the primary responsibility for achieving this goal, Ontarians should have the means to ensure that it is achieved in an effective, timely, open and fair manner.

The purposes of the *Act* are:

- To protect, conserve and where reasonable, restore the integrity of the environment by the means provided in the *Act*;
- To provide sustainability of the environment by the means provided in the *Act*; and
- To protect the right to a healthful environment by the means provided in the *Act*.

These purposes include the following:

- The prevention, reduction and elimination of the use, generation and release of pollutants that are an unreasonable threat to the integrity of the environment.
  - The protection and conservation of biological, ecological and genetic diversity.
  - The protection and conservation of natural resources, including plant life, animal life and ecological systems.
  - The encouragement of the wise management of our natural resources, including plant life, animal life and ecological systems.
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- The identification, protection and conservation of ecologically sensitive areas or processes.

To assist in fulfilling these purposes, the Act provides:

- the means by which Ontarians may participate in the making of environmentally significant decisions by the Government of Ontario;
- increased accountability of the Government of Ontario for its environmental decision-making;
- increased access to the courts by residents of Ontario for the protection of the environment; and
- enhanced protection for employees who take action in respect of environmental harm.

The *EBR* requires a Statement of Environmental Values (SEV) from all prescribed ministries. The prescribed ministries are listed at:

[http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/content/index2.jsp?f0=aboutTheRegistry.statement&f1=aboutTheRegistry.statement.value&menuIndex=0\\_3&language=en](http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/content/index2.jsp?f0=aboutTheRegistry.statement&f1=aboutTheRegistry.statement.value&menuIndex=0_3&language=en)

The SEV is a means for prescribed government ministries to record their commitment to the environment and be accountable for ensuring consideration of the environment in their decisions. A SEV explains:

- how the purposes of the *EBR* are to be applied when decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry; and
- how consideration of the purposes of the *EBR* should be integrated with other considerations, including social, economic and scientific considerations, that are part of decision-making in the ministry.

It is each Minister's responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure the SEV is considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry.

Every five years the Minister will review the SEV and make necessary amendments.

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## 2. MINISTRY VISION, MISSION, MANDATE AND BUSINESS

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) strives to unlock the potential of Ontario's rural, agriculture and food systems by:

- contributing to the safety and assurance of the agri-food system;
- providing stewardship of Ontario's capacity to produce food; and
- fostering economic development of the sector and rural Ontario.

Through its actions, the ministry supports rural and urban communities alike, and builds a high quality of life for all Ontario residents.

OMAFRA is committed to engaging and collaborating with partner ministries on matters of shared interest. OMAFRA will also engage Ontarians in an open and transparent manner consistent with the principles of open government.

Specific details on the responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs can be found on the Ministry's website: [www.ontario.ca/omafra](http://www.ontario.ca/omafra).

## 3. APPLICATION OF THE SEV

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs is committed to applying the purposes of the *Environmental Bill of Rights Act* and its Statement of Environmental Values when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment as it develops Acts, regulations, policies and programs by applying the following environmental principles and implementation strategies.

### Environmental Principles

- Promote sustainable production of food, feed, and bio-products.
- Encourage stewardship of healthy rural ecosystems.
- Build the capacity of rural communities to enhance their environmental, social and economic quality of life.

### Implementation Strategies

To apply its environmental principles and Statement of Environmental Values, the ministry uses any or all of the following implementation strategies.

### Education and Awareness

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Promote understanding of environmental risks and opportunities, and empower action to reduce environmental risks via:

- *Knowledge Translation and Transfer*: Stimulate development and facilitate use of information, tools, technologies and best management practices to improve environmental performance and competitiveness.
- *Ministry Capacity*: Educate staff on environmental issues and assist them in incorporating consideration of environmental impacts into policy and program development.
- *Leverage Connections*: Develop and enhance networks and partnerships with external organizations, other ministries and levels of government that contribute to ministry outcomes and increase impact.

### **Investments**

- Encourage strategic investments that result in environmental improvements and innovation.
- Foster partnerships to leverage resources from other sources to increase the environmental benefits of programs.

### **Research, Science and Technological Innovation**

- Encourage research and innovation in the natural/social/applied sciences to address strategic environmental issues and support evidence-based decisions.

### **Information Management and Performance Measurement**

- Improve the use of information and data to support development and implementation of policy and programs, and help document environmental performance against anticipated outcomes.

### **Policy Coordination and Innovation**

- Employ risk-based analysis of the evidence to support decision-making.
- Engage partner ministries on initiatives of shared interest.
- Influence policy and regulatory approaches to ensure they are evidence-based, strategic and innovative, to improve both environmental performance and competitiveness.

## **4. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs will take into account social, economic and other considerations when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment. These will be integrated with the purposes of the *Environmental Bill of Rights Act*.

Through public consultation and its own internal review and assessment processes, OMAFRA will aim to document and positively address environmental impacts of its work.

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In making decisions that affect the environment, the ministry will seek to use the best evidence available along with other pertinent information.

OMAFRA will collaborate with other ministries and governments, industries and stakeholders on initiatives that intersect with its mandate.

The ministry will support initiatives in other ministries, including land use planning, growth management, water protection, biodiversity and energy supply.

## **5. MONITORING USE OF THE SEV**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will document how the SEV was considered each time a decision on an Act, regulation or policy is posted on the Environmental Registry. The Ministry will ensure that staff involved in decisions that might significantly affect the environment is aware of the ministry's *Environmental Bill of Rights Act* obligations.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs believes that public consultations are instrumental in environmental decision-making. The ministry will provide opportunities for an open and consultative process when making decisions regarding Acts, regulations, policies and programs that might significantly affect the environment.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs believe that the public interest requires a broad-based effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the challenges posed by a changing climate. OMAFRA will continue to engage the agri-food sector, rural communities and First Nation and Métis communities in supporting a high-productivity, low-carbon economy while fostering economic growth in Ontario.

## **8. CONSIDERATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs recognizes the value Indigenous people place on the environment. When making decisions that might significantly affect the environment, the Ministry will provide opportunities for involvement of Indigenous people whose interests may be affected by such decisions so that Indigenous interests can be appropriately considered. This commitment is not intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation the province may have to consult with Indigenous people.

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## **9. GREENING OF INTERNAL OPERATIONS**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs believes in the wise use and conservation of natural resources.

The Ministry will support Government of Ontario initiatives to conserve energy and water in its own operations, and to wisely use our air and land resources in order to generate environmental, health and economic benefits for present and future generations.

The Ministry will continue to encourage energy conservation and resource conservation in its own operations. For example, the Ministry will ensure office lights are turned off when possible, office equipment is turned off when not in use and explicitly considering environmental performance of the various options when equipment leases or purchase decisions are made. The Ministry will also continue to educate and encourage staff on the 3Rs – reduction, reuse and recycling – to divert materials from disposal.

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