

Draft Statement of Environmental Values:

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

1. Introduction

The Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993 (EBR or the Act) came into force 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.
- The identification, protection and conservation of ecologically sensitive areas or processes.

To assist in fulfilling these purposes, the Act provides:

- A means by which Ontarians may participate in the making of decisions made by prescribed ministries which could have a significant effect on the environment;
- Increased accountability of prescribed ministries;
- 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 that all prescribed ministries develop and finalize a Statement of Environmental Values (SEV). Ministries are prescribed for various provisions under the Act pursuant to O. Reg. 73/94, and a list of ministries that must develop an SEV can be found here: <https://ero.ontario.ca/page/sevs>

The EBR states that an SEV explains how the purposes of the EBR are to be applied when decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made and explains how consideration of the purposes of the EBR should be integrated with other considerations, including social, economic, and scientific considerations.

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

The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will endeavour to review the SEV every five years and will make any amendments that the Minister determines to be necessary.

2. Ministry Vision and Mandate

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' vision is an Ontario with clean air, land and water with healthy communities and a prosperous economy. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks administers legislation aimed at protecting clean air, land and water, species at risk and their habitat, building community resilience and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to help tackle climate change, and managing Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves for present and future generations of Ontarians.

Specific details on the responsibilities of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks can be found on the Ministry website <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-environment-conservation-parks>.

3. Application of the SEV

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The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is committed to taking every reasonable step to ensure that the ministry's SEV is considered when decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the Ministry. As it develops Acts, regulations and policies, the Ministry will apply the following principles:

- The Ministry adopts an ecosystem approach to environmental protection and resource management. This approach views the ecosystem as composed of air, land, water and living organisms, including humans, and the interactions among them.
- The Ministry considers the cumulative effects on the environment; the interdependence of air, land, water and living organisms; and the relationships among the environment, the economy and society.
- The Ministry considers the effects of its decisions on current and future generations, consistent with sustainable development principles.
- The Ministry uses a precautionary, science-based approach in its decision-making to protect human health and the environment.
- The Ministry's environmental protection strategy will place priority on preventing pollution and minimizing the creation of pollutants that can adversely affect the environment.
- The Ministry endeavours to have the perpetrator of pollution pay for the cost of clean up and rehabilitation consistent with the polluter pays principle.
- In the event that significant environmental harm is caused, the Ministry will work to ensure that the environment is rehabilitated to the extent feasible.
- Planning and management for environmental protection should strive for continuous improvement and effectiveness through adaptive management.
- The Ministry supports and promotes a range of tools that encourage environmental protection and sustainability (e.g. stewardship, outreach, education).
- The Ministry will encourage increased transparency, timely reporting and enhanced ongoing engagement with the public as part of environmental decision making.

Decisions on proposed Acts, regulations and policies reflect the above principles. The ministry works to protect, restore and enhance the natural environment by:

- Developing policies, legislation, regulations and standards to protect the environment and human health,
- Using science and research to support policy development, environmental solutions and reporting,
- Ensuring that planning, which aims to identify and evaluate environmental benefits and risks, takes place at the earliest stages in the decision- making process;
- Undertaking compliance and enforcement actions to ensure consistency with environmental laws, and
- Environmental monitoring and reporting to track progress over time and inform the public on environmental quality.

In addition, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will use a range of innovative programs and initiatives, including strong partnerships, public engagement, strategic knowledge management, and economic incentives and disincentives to carry out its responsibilities.

4. Integration with Other Considerations

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will strive to integrate environmental considerations with social, economic and scientific considerations, as well as considerations raised by or related to Indigenous communities, when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

In making decisions, the Ministry will use the best science available. It will support scientific research, the development and application of technologies, and processes and services.

5. Monitoring Use of the SEV

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will document how the SEV was considered when making decisions on acts, regulations or policies that might significantly affect the environment. The Ministry will ensure that its staff are aware of the Ministry's obligations under the EBR, including the content in the SEV, and how to apply the SEV.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks reviews and reports, both internally and to the Auditor General of Ontario, on its progress in implementing the SEV.

6. Consultation

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks recognizes that public consultation is vital to sound environmental decision-making. The Ministry will provide opportunities for an open and consultative process when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

7. Climate Change

The climate is changing and people across the province are experiencing impacts.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will work with individuals, businesses, communities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous communities to

identify the threats from climate change to Ontario's environment and evaluate opportunities to advance the province's core climate change goals while fostering a prosperous economy and society in Ontario.

In doing so, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will endeavour to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the government's greenhouse gas emission reduction target and enhance Ontario's resilience to a changing climate by improving our understanding of how climate change will impact Ontario, helping Ontarians prepare for those impacts, building partnerships to improve local climate resilience and endeavouring to ensure that climate mitigation and resilience are reflected in relevant policies and programs.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will endeavour to work with other ministries to support the integration of climate change considerations into government decision making.

8. Consideration of Indigenous Peoples

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks recognizes the value that Indigenous peoples place on the environment. When making decisions that might significantly affect the environment, the Ministry will provide opportunities for involvement of Indigenous peoples whose interests may be affected by such decisions so that Indigenous people's 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 peoples.

9. Greening of Internal Operations

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks recognizes the wise use and conservation of natural resources. The Ministry will support Government of Ontario initiatives to reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for the impacts of a changing climate, conserve energy and water, and to wisely use our air, water and land resources in order to generate sustainable environmental, health and economic benefits for present and future generations.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is committed to reducing its environmental footprint by greening its internal operations, and supporting environmentally sustainable practices for its partners, stakeholders and suppliers. A range of activities is being

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undertaken to reduce the Ministry's air emissions, energy use, water consumption, and waste generation. These include: monitoring and reducing the Ministry's carbon footprint, promoting energy and water conservation in ministry outreach and educational activities, and supporting government-wide greening and sustainability initiatives.