

Statement of Environmental Values: Ministry of Government and Consumer Services

1. Introduction

The Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) 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;
- 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:

- 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 from all designated ministries. The designated ministries are **listed here**.

Statements of Environmental Values (SEV) are a means for designated 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 every reasonable step to ensure that the SEV is considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry.

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services will endeavour to review the SEV every five years and will make any amendments that are determined to be necessary.

2. Ministry Vision, Mandate and Business

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (MGCS) delivers vital programs, services, and products — ranging from health cards, driver's licences, and birth certificates to consumer protection and public safety — to help create a better quality of life for Ontarians. We also enforce consumer protection statutes and protect consumers as they make important decisions, like signing a contract for home renovations, making new home and condo purchases, travelling, and buying a car.

MGCS delivers business-critical functions such as procurement, financial processing, transfer payment administration, human resources, and pay and benefits, that keep government operating. We also deliver the essential information technology infrastructure to support government operations, while providing 24/7/365 cyber security monitoring services. The ministry also provides enterprise strategic and policy advice and guidance to ministries, agencies and the broader public sector on records and information management, access to information, and privacy protection.

In addition, the ministry manages one of the largest real estate portfolios in Canada, including the policies and programs to ensure its properties help deliver public services in a cost-effective manner.

Specific details of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services can be found on **the Ministry internet site**.

3. Application of the SEV

MGCS is committed to applying the purposes of the EBR when decisions that might significantly affect the environment need to be made in the Ministry, and as it develops legislation, regulations, and policies by the application of the following principles:

- The health of the natural environment is sustained by the public service through government operations.
- The purposes of the EBR are integrated into legislative and policy initiatives.
- The purposes of the EBR are integral in the management of MGCS and the provision of services to the public and the OPS.

MGCS will seek to apply these principles in its own administration and decision making to make choices that encourage environmental integrity.

MGCS has delegated responsibility for certain obligations under the EBR to the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA), a not-for-profit administrative authority. The TSSA administers regulations under the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 on behalf of MGCS as it relates to the EBR.

4. Integration with Other Considerations

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services will take into account environmental considerations together with social, economic and scientific considerations. These considerations will be integrated with the purposes of the EBR when decisions that might significantly affect the environment need to be made. There are several business activities within MGCS that take into account other considerations including social, economic and scientific considerations.

5. Monitoring Use of the SEV

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services 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 its staff are aware of the Ministry's obligations under the EBR, including the content in the SEV, and how to apply the SEV.

6. Consultation

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services 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 Government and Consumer Services will continue to 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.

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services will integrate climate change considerations into decision-making and continue to address climate change challenges by helping to build resilience in Ontario. The Ministry will continue to do our share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the government's greenhouse gas emission reduction target.

8. Consideration of Indigenous Peoples

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services 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 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 Government and Consumer Services believes in the wise use and conservation of natural resources. The Ministry will support and work to promote Government of Ontario initiatives to conserve energy and water, 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 has adopted a digital first approach through digital initiatives that reduce the use of paper and travel. The ministry will continue to encourage energy conservation and resource conservation in its own operations by, for example, facilitating remote work and electronic signatures across the OPS.

The Ministry is also taking environmental concerns into close consideration when work and decision-making are being done where the government's real estate portfolio is concerned.

