

Statement of Environmental Values: Ministry of Mines

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 the present and future generations.

While the government has the primary responsibility for achieving this goal, the people should have 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.
- provide sustainability of the environment by the means provided in the Act; and,
- protect the right to a healthful environment by the means provided in the Act.

These purposes include:

- 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; and
- 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 act in respect of environmental harm.

The EBR requires a Statement of Environmental Values (SEV) from all prescribed ministries as stated in Part I of reg 73/94. The prescribed ministries are listed at: <https://ero.ontario.ca/page/sevs>

SEVs 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 will be applied when decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry; and
- how the consideration of the purposes of the EBR will be integrated with other considerations, including social, economic, Indigenous 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 Mines (MINES) will examine the SEV on a periodic basis to ensure the SEV is current and accurate.

2. Ministry Vision, Mandate and Business

MINES works to make Ontario's mineral exploration, mining and geoscience sectors strong, healthy and prosperous. The Ministry pursues its vision and mandate in a manner consistent with the Crown's duty to consult and works to minimize the impact of these activities on public health, safety and the environment.

MINES promotes a strong, safe and sustainable minerals industry by providing a predictable and efficient regulatory regime, generating valuable geological information, supporting Aboriginal consultation and ensuring safe and environmentally sound mineral development and rehabilitation.

This SEV reflects MINES' commitment to transparency when making decisions that might significantly impact the environment.

More details on MINES' responsibilities can be found on the Ministry's website at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-mines>

3. Application of the SEV

MINES is committed to applying the purposes of the EBR when decisions that might significantly affect the environment need to be made by the Ministry. As it develops acts, regulations, policies, and instruments the Ministry will:

- consider the effects of decisions on current and future generations of Ontarians, consistent with principles of sustainable development;
- consider the opportunities and threats from climate change to Ontario's environment and people's health, safety and prosperity;
- evaluate opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or enhance Ontario's resilience to a changing climate; and
- consider and evaluate environmental costs, benefits, and risks when planning initiatives and ensure that cost-effective environmental protections are incorporated, when required.

Recognizing that achieving the environmentally sustainable development of Ontario's mineral resources and the continuing availability of mineral resources for the long-term benefit of the people of Ontario requires:

- an understanding of the ecological, physical, social, cultural and economic impacts of development on a project-by-project basis;
- sound environmental planning that recognizes mining as a temporary land use, which may be replaced in the long-term with alternative natural, recreational, industrial or commercial land use; and
- the consideration of mitigation strategies to address possible long-term effects on the environment, as appropriate.

4. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

In collaboration with individuals, businesses, communities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous communities, MINES will work to advance the province's core climate change goals by:

- building resilience through:
 - improving our understanding of how climate change will impact Ontario and helping Ontarians prepare for the impacts of climate change; and

- updating government policies and building partnerships to improve local climate resilience; and
- continuing to do our share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

MINES will endeavour to support local climate change solutions and community resilience when making decisions that may significantly affect the environment.

5. Integration with Other Considerations

In line with the purpose of the EBR, MINES will strive to balance environmental considerations with social, economic, Indigenous and scientific considerations when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

MINES will integrate this SEV into its strategic planning, priority setting and policy and program development activities.

MINES will balance environmental values and other relevant considerations by comparing environmental impacts with other impacts to communities, all people in Ontario and future generations.

MINES will work to ensure that decisions that may significantly impact the environment are evidence-based and constitute efficient and effective means to achieve positive outcomes for people in Ontario.

6. Consultation

MINES recognizes that assessing the impacts of decisions that may significantly affect the environment is best accomplished when affected communities, including Indigenous communities, are consulted.

MINES aspires to consult with affected communities in an open and transparent manner by:

- posting clear documentation on the environmental registry so that people in Ontario can contribute to policy decision-making processes.
- considering affected communities' concerns about environmental impacts and climate change and the costs and benefits of regulation; and
- engaging with affected communities in their preferred language, wherever feasible.

7. Consideration of Indigenous Peoples

MINES commits to building respectful relationships and engaging in a meaningful way with Indigenous people and communities.

MINES recognizes and is committed to fulfilling the Crown's constitutional duty to consult and accommodate First Nation and Métis communities when the Ministry contemplates an action or decision that might adversely affect established or asserted Aboriginal or treaty rights.

When making decisions that might significantly affect the environment, the Ministry will provide opportunities for the engagement and involvement of Indigenous people and affected communities so that their broader interests can be considered appropriately. This commitment is not intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation the province may have with respect to the duty to consult.

8. Greening of Internal Operations

MINES is committed to reducing its environmental footprint by greening its internal operations. The Ministry will support cost effective sustainability practices among its partners, stakeholders, and suppliers as well as government-wide greening, sustainability initiatives, and conservation.

9. Monitoring

MINES will document how this SEV was considered when making decisions that may significantly affect the environment.

MINES will ensure that staff are aware of the Ministry's obligations under the EBR, including the content and application of the Ministry's SEV.