

## **Statement of Environmental Values**

### **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* (EBR) legislation (the “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; 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 take action in respect of environmental harm.

The EBR provides that the minister of each prescribed ministry shall prepare a Statement of Environmental Values (SEV). The prescribed ministries and their SEVs are listed on the Environmental Registry of Ontario at <https://ero.ontario.ca>.

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 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 will examine the SEV on a periodic basis to ensure that it is current.

## 2. MINISTRY VISION, MANDATE AND BUSINESS

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing works with local governments and partners across Ontario to build safe and strong urban and rural communities with dynamic local economies, a high quality of life and affordable and suitable homes for everyone.

The ministry's major areas of responsibility, service and program delivery include the following:

- work with 444 municipalities and partners to support provincial-municipal relationships across government
- administer and update the Ontario Building Code
- set the rules for Ontario's land use planning, including the administration of the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement and provincial plans such as A Place to Grow and the Greenbelt Plan, and oversee how municipalities implement them
- help residents and municipalities following sudden, unexpected natural disasters
- set the rules for municipal elections
- develop rules that protect tenants and encourage maintenance and investment in rental housing
- work with municipalities, community housing providers and other external stakeholders to help them meet their housing responsibilities
- support municipalities so individuals and families can access suitable housing
- fund construction and repair of community housing and affordable rental housing
- set the annual rent-increase guideline and other rules related to rental housing

### 3. APPLICATION OF THE SEV

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is committed to applying the purposes of the EBR when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment, including as it develops acts, regulations and policies. The ministry will apply the following principles in making those decisions:

#### Maintaining Strong Relationships with Local Governments:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will build and maintain strong relationships with municipal governments through the sharing of governance tools and innovative ideas for environmentally-responsible decision-making.

#### Promoting Building Safety, Accessibility and Energy Efficiency:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, through the *Building Code Act, 1992* and the Building Code, will support a regulatory system that enhances environmental integrity, resource conservation, and safe, accessible and energy efficient buildings.

#### Ensuring Well-Planned and Healthy Communities while Protecting Greenspace:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will support a land use planning system that promotes environmentally sustainable, complete communities, and transit-oriented development by applying the ministry's expertise to effectively direct growth; optimize investments in infrastructure, including transit; support green space; natural heritage

and water quality and quantity; ensure wise management, conservation and use of natural resources; and protection of public health and safety.

#### Increasing and Maintaining the Supply of Housing:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to ensure that good planning principles enable the construction of safe and healthy buildings, and that protections for the environment, human health and safety are maintained. This may include supporting intensification and more efficient use of existing community housing sites; working to include energy efficiency as part of new housing development programs, and for renovation, retrofit and redevelopment programs.

### 4. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will take into account social, economic, health, infrastructure, transportation and other considerations; these will be integrated with the purposes of the EBR when decisions that might significantly affect the environment need to be made.

The ministry will also consider infrastructure investment, source water protection, climate change resiliency, mitigation and adaptation, burden reduction, economic development, energy supply, stronger rural communities and protecting prime agricultural areas.

### 5. MONITORING USE OF THE SEV

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will monitor and assess changes in its activities and will review and report on its progress in implementing the SEV.

The ministry will document how the SEV was considered each time a decision on an act, regulation or policy is posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

The ministry will ensure that staff involved in decisions that may significantly affect the environment are aware of the ministry's EBR obligations and appropriately document the considerations.

The ministry will provide EBR training to ministry staff and information resources on EBR.

## 6. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing believes that public consultation is vital to sound decision-making. The ministry will provide opportunities for an open and consultative process when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment. This includes fulfilling the requirement under the *Planning Act* for public consultation on land use planning decisions.

The ministry remains committed to the EBR and the ministry's statutory obligations contained therein. The ministry recognizes the EBR's value in improving public engagement and government performance on environmental stewardship. The ministry will ensure its responsibilities under the EBR are implemented and will strive to ensure that its use of the Environmental Registry of Ontario continues to allow the public to participate and be informed. The ministry will:

- Continue to place great importance on the proper use of the Environmental Registry of Ontario and continue consulting with the public for input on proposals which may have potential impacts on the environment;
- Recognize the importance of communicating significant decisions with the public through the Environmental Registry of Ontario, and will continue to use the Environmental Registry of Ontario as one of its primary public consultation tools;
- Work to manage all outdated decision and proposal notices in a timely manner;
- Acknowledge the importance of responding to Applications for Review within statutory timelines, while recognizing that some EBR applications raise complex matters requiring an integrated, multi-faceted response by government; and
- Continue to apply its SEV in environmentally significant decisions.

## 7. CLIMATE CHANGE

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to involve and engage individuals, businesses, communities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous communities with the goal of fostering a prosperous economy and society in Ontario that is resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.

The ministry will work to advance the province's core climate change goals by:

- Ensuring policies and programs consider the impacts of a changing climate to build resilience:
- helping Ontarians prepare for the impacts of changing climate; and
- updating government policies and building partnerships to improve local resilience to climate impacts
- Helping the province do its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The ministry will endeavour to support community climate resilience when making decisions that may significantly affect the environment.

The ministry will also work with partner ministries such as the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks to consider climate change mitigation and resilience to climate impacts as part of the government decision-making process.

## 8. CONSIDERATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' INTERESTS

In recognition of the many historic treaties signed in Ontario, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing respects the special relationship that Indigenous peoples have with the environment and their deep connection, spiritually and culturally, to the land, water, air, plants and animals. When making decisions that may affect the environment, the ministry will build on best practices and protocols for engagement to identify opportunities to work collaboratively and respectfully with Indigenous communities.

The ministry will consider the environmental needs and perspectives of Indigenous peoples throughout the policy and program development, and decision-making process.

This will include considering traditional knowledge and perspectives, if offered by Indigenous communities through meaningful and informed engagement or consultation, and the unique perspectives of elders, women and youth. The ministry will encourage municipalities to build constructive, cooperative relationships through meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities when making decisions within their jurisdiction.

## 9. CONSULTATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing respects Aboriginal and treaty rights and is committed to meeting the province's legal constitutional obligations to Indigenous peoples. The ministry will implement the SEV in a manner that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

The EBR provides Indigenous communities with the opportunity to provide comments and is an additional mechanism to solicit input and is not intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation Ontario may have to consult with Indigenous peoples.

## 10. GREENING OF INTERNAL OPERATIONS

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing believes in the wise use and conservation of natural resources.

The ministry will continue to implement Government of Ontario initiatives to reduce emissions and energy costs across government and to conserve energy and water in its own operations. It will wisely use air and land resources to generate environmental, health and economic benefits for present and future generations.

The ministry will also work with partner ministries to consider additional ways in which the ministry can green its internal operations.

The ministry will continue to identify and adopt ways to conserve both energy and resources in its own operations. Options include minimizing paper use, turning off office lights when possible, explicitly considering the environmental impact of various options when decisions on acquiring goods and services are made, and promoting environmentally respectful office practices.