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The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Energy and Mines
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By email: MinisterEnergy@Ontario.ca

Michael Di Cosmo
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**Re: ERO 026-0670: Proposal to Update the Statement of Environmental Values
for the Ministry of Energy and Mines**

Dear Minister Lecce and Mr. Di Cosmo:

The Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a not-for-profit grassroots organization with a mission to protect, conserve, and restore Ontario rivers. ORA advocates for effective policy and legislation to ensure that development affecting Ontario rivers is environmentally and socially sustainable.

ORA has reviewed the draft Statement of Environmental Values (SEV) for the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) and the two statements it would replace. The Environmental Registry notice says the climate change content of the former statements *has merged* into the new document.¹ It has not merged. It has been cut. The draft removed the commitment to sustainable development, the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the commitment to help Ontarians prepare for the impacts of climate change, and the commitment to engage with communities in their preferred language. It replaces the word *evaluate* with the word *consider*. And it never once mentions water.

This matters now more than at any point in the past thirty or more years. One ministry now sets Ontario's energy priorities, directs what the province procures to meet them, and decides which mineral projects proceed. Both sides of that mandate run on water. Both change rivers. ORA's position is that the largest single long-term risk to ratepayers, taxpayers, the climate and Ontario rivers is more hydroelectric development, followed closely by the mine waste that will be left behind. An SEV that does not mention water, rivers, fish or cumulative effects cannot manage either risk.

MEM is not doing this by choice. In December 2025, the Auditor General of Ontario (AG) told MEM to update its SEV, consult the public, and report back on what the public changed.² MEM agreed. It then told her it was *working to update the SEV to reflect its current mandate and current*



*government priorities.*² There is the problem. Government priorities are not necessarily environmental values. An SEV records what the environment is owed when the ministry decides, not what the ministry wants to build.

ORA makes 35 recommendations below. This submission is copied to the AG.

1. What the Law Requires

The *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* (the Act) sets the test. Section 7 requires a prescribed ministry to prepare a statement that *explains how the purposes of this Act are to be applied when decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry*, and how those purposes are integrated with other considerations.³

The purposes of the Act are set out in section 2. They include protecting, conserving and, where reasonable, restoring the integrity of the environment, providing *sustainability of the environment*, and protecting the right to a healthful environment. They expressly include *the protection and conservation of biological, ecological and genetic diversity* and *the protection and conservation of natural resources, including plant life, animal life and ecological systems*. The Act also exists to provide *the means by which residents of Ontario may participate in the making of environmentally significant decisions* and to increase government accountability for environmental decision-making.³

1.1 What an SEV Can and Cannot Do

It is worth being clear about what this document is, because it changes what ORA is asking for. An SEV is not law. It is the ministry's own written promise to Ontarians. The Act does not dictate its contents, and the SEV does not, by itself, oblige MEM to do anything. What is binding is the duty attached to it. Section 11 of the Act provides that *the minister shall take every reasonable step to ensure that the ministry statement of environmental values is considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry*.³

That is the whole mechanism, and it has one consequence that matters here. The duty is a duty to consider whatever the ministry has written down. Nothing more and nothing less. A commitment removed from the text is a commitment removed from the duty. Delete water from the SEV, and there is nothing about water to consider. Replace "evaluate" with "consider" and the duty attaches to the weaker verb.

Enforcement is thin. Judicial review under the Act reaches only instruments, and only where a minister has failed in a fundamental way to comply with the public consultation requirements.³ There is no legal duty to review an SEV periodically; the Act says only that a minister may amend it from time to time. In practice, the single effective check is the AG's annual audit of whether ministries considered their statements, and that audit is conducted against the words in the text.²

So, ORA is not asking MEM to give this document legal force it does not have. ORA is asking MEM to promise more, in writing, because the promise is the only thing the Minister is then obliged to consider and the only thing the AG can hold the ministry to.

1.2 The Draft Does Not Meet the Test

The draft reproduces those purposes on its first two pages and then does not apply them. Nothing in the operative sections explains how MEM will protect biological diversity, how it will conserve



animal life and ecological systems, or how it will provide for the sustainability of the environment. The purposes are quoted, not applied.

The draft is also weaker than the sum of what it replaces. The current Ministry of Energy statement runs 1,398 words, and the Ministry of Mines statement runs 1,362 words.^{4,5} The draft runs 1,485 words and covers both sectors. Climate change is named nine times in the current Energy statement and three times in the draft. The word *evaluate* appears in both current statements and does not appear in the draft at all.⁶

ORA raises one further matter here and returns to it in section 10.2. Part I of the regulation the draft relies on does not prescribe a Ministry of Energy and Mines. It prescribes a Ministry of Energy and a Ministry of Mines, separately, and it still did so as of the most recent consolidation of July 31, 2026.⁷

ORA Recommendation 1: Revise the draft so that each operative section states how a purpose set out in section 2 of the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*, will be applied to MEM decisions, rather than reciting those purposes in the introduction and omitting them from the body.

2. What Is Missing

2.1 Water

The draft never mentions water. The words water, river, lake, watershed, wetland, groundwater, fish, fish habitat, biodiversity and species do not appear anywhere in it.⁶

MEM sets Ontario's energy priorities and the pathways for meeting them, and it directs the IESO on what to procure. The Minister's April 2026 directive launching the Long Lead-Time Request for Proposals is the current example: the IESO runs the procurement, but the decision that Ontario would buy new hydroelectric generation at all was the Minister's.⁸ MEM also decides which mineral projects proceed. Every one of those decisions is a water decision. A dam floods land, changes the timing and volume of flow, blocks fish passage, raises and lowers water levels, warms and de-oxygenates water behind the structure, and traps the sediment a river needs downstream. A mine takes water, dewateres rock, stores tailings underwater, and discharges treated effluent to water. Ontario's own Provincial Fish Strategy identifies dams and altered flows among the pressures on Ontario fisheries.

Ontario Power Generation alone operates 66 hydroelectric stations and 239 dams on 24 river systems.⁸ These are not marginal effects on a minor resource. Fresh water is the resource on which both of MEM's sectors depend, and it is the resource this Statement of Environmental Values does not name.⁹

ORA Recommendation 2: Name water. Section 3 of the SEV should commit MEM to consider effects on rivers, lakes, wetlands, groundwater, flow regimes, water levels, water quality, water quantity, fish, fish habitat and fish passage whenever it makes a decision that might significantly affect the environment.

ORA Recommendation 3: Name biological diversity and ecological systems as matters MEM will consider, in the words used by section 2 of the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*.



2.2 Cumulative Effects

The draft never mentions cumulative effects. Each decision is judged on its own, as though it were the only one.

A river does not work that way. Dams are built in series. Each new dam changes the stretch above it, and the stretch below it, and the next dam changes those stretches again. Fifty years of separately approved projects produce a river that no single approval ever assessed. Scientists have documented this pattern in regulated rivers for decades.¹⁰ ORA's own regional work on the collapse of the American Eel in the upper St. Lawrence, Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River watersheds shows the result: a migratory fish population lost to a series of individually approved projects, not one of which was required to count the others.¹¹

Mining works the same way. One tailings facility is assessed alone. The watershed receives the seepage, the effluent and the water taking from all of them; together with the roads, the transmission lines and the dams, compounding the environmental effects.

ORA Recommendation 4: To protect the public's right to a healthful and sustainable environment, commit MEM in the SEV to consider the cumulative effects of its decisions on a watershed basis, together with the effects of existing and reasonably foreseeable projects, rather than assessing each proposal in isolation.

2.3 Sustainability

The phrase *consistent with principles of sustainable development* appears in both current statements and has been deleted from the draft.^{4,5,6} In the Ministry of Mines statement, the commitment to a *strong, safe and sustainable* minerals industry becomes a commitment to a *strong, safe and responsible* one.

Sustainability is not an optional value that a ministry may drop when it is inconvenient. Providing *sustainability of the environment* is one of the three stated purposes of the Act.³ A Statement of Environmental Values that removes the word *sustainable* cannot explain how that purpose is applied.

What replaces it is telling. Instead of weighing environmental effects on future generations against principles of sustainable development, the draft weighs them against "the long-term goal of delivering an affordable, secure, reliable, and clean energy system." An environmental standard has been replaced with a supply objective set by the ministry itself.

ORA Recommendation 5: Restore the words "consistent with principles of sustainable development" to the operative provisions of the SEV and restore the commitment to a sustainable minerals industry.

ORA Recommendation 6: Remove the ministry's own energy supply objective as the benchmark for assessing effects on current and future generations. A Statement of Environmental Values must measure decisions against environmental purposes, not against the ministry's business plan.

3. Greenwashing

3.1 A Reservoir Has No Smokestack



The draft introduces a new test. MEM will *compare the emission intensity of different energy resources*.⁶ The term is not defined anywhere in the document.

Emission intensity measures the greenhouse gases released at the point of generation for each unit of electricity produced. A gas plant has a smokestack, so its emissions are counted. A hydroelectric reservoir has no smokestack, so the Minister assumes it to be zero, and his own words in Energy for Generations refer to hydroelectricity as *non-emitting* more than once.¹² It is not zero.

A reservoir releases greenhouse gases by four routes: diffusion from the reservoir surface, bubbles of methane rising from the sediment held behind the dam, degassing at the powerhouse and spillway as pressure drops through the turbines, and continued release from the river downstream.¹³ Flooded soil and vegetation decompose behind the dam, and in that low-to-no-oxygen environment methane is produced. The river keeps delivering new organic matter and sediment, and the dam continues to trap it. So the supply of biomass is renewed and builds for as long as the structure remains.¹⁴

These emissions do not fade with age. Soued and colleagues found that *while CO₂ and CH₄ diffusion are modelled as decreasing with reservoir age, ebullition and degassing remain constant*, and that methane, mainly through bubbling and degassing, is expected to make up more than 75 percent of reservoir-induced radiative forcing.¹⁵ The point is confirmed in the field. A reservoir that was 90 years old at the time of measurement produced *the highest [methane emissions] ever documented for a midlatitude reservoir*.¹⁶

The trend is upward, not downward. As water warms and nutrients build up, methane production rises. Eutrophication alone is projected to increase methane emissions from lakes and impoundments by 30 to 90 percent over the next century.¹⁷

What that means in plain terms is this. Methane traps 84 to 86 times more heat than carbon dioxide over 20 years, and 28 to 34 times more over 100 years.¹⁸ A tonne of methane leaving a reservoir today therefore does roughly 85 times the damage of a tonne of carbon dioxide over the period in which Ontario has promised to cut its emissions. The province's 2030 and 2035 targets fall inside that window. Hydroelectric reservoirs are not helping Ontario meet those targets. They are working against them. A reservoir does not mitigate climate change. It fuels it, and it keeps fuelling it for as long as the dam stands.

None of this is new to government. Environment Canada wrote in 2004 that *largely because of the climate-change driven pursuit of "clean" energy sources, attention has also focused on the role of water storage in affecting production and emission of greenhouse gases (GHG). In contrast to the widespread assumption ... that GHGs emitted from reservoirs are negligible, measurements made in boreal and tropical regions indicate they can be substantial*.¹⁹

This is not a hypothetical risk. MEM already calls hydroelectricity non-emitting, in print, in the Minister's own plan.

Energy for Generations, Ontario's Integrated Energy Plan, states at page 54 that large hydroelectric projects *become multi-generational assets, providing decades of non-emitting electricity, system flexibility, and economic benefits*. The same plan describes Ontario's grid as having *about 84 percent of generation coming from non-emitting sources*, a figure that counts the hydroelectric fleet. And it lists hydroelectricity among the *clean sources* that generate Clean Energy Credits, each of which is sold to a business as evidence of its use of *non-emitting electricity*.¹²



So, the label is already applied, and it is applied to the very resource whose emissions this section describes. Ontario is selling credits to businesses on the strength of it.

The word *clean* appears twice in the draft SEV and is not defined.⁶ Put the two together. If MEM adopts emission intensity as its environmental test and non-emitting as its label, every reservoir in Ontario is scored at zero before it is ever assessed, and the methane described above is counted nowhere. That is not a comparison of energy resources. It is a conclusion written into the ministry's own Statement of Environmental Values, and it is simply greenwashing.

If MEM wishes to keep the word, there are credible anchors it can use, and each of them makes ORA's point rather than the ministry's.

The federal *Clean Electricity Regulations* set a numeric standard: an emissions intensity cap of 65 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per gigawatt hour from 2035 to 2049, falling to zero in 2050.²⁰ That standard applies to fuel-burning generating units. It does not reach a reservoir at all, because a reservoir burns nothing. So the only numeric federal definition of clean electricity in Canadian law is silent on the emissions this section describes. Silence is not a finding of zero. Methods to measure reservoir emissions exist and are internationally recognized. The 2019 Refinement to the IPCC Guidelines provides methods for diffusive, bubbling and downstream methane from flooded land, including reservoirs more than 20 years old.²¹ Nothing prevents MEM from applying them. It has chosen not to.

There is also a legal standard for the claim itself. The *Competition Act* prohibits environmental claims about a product or a business activity that are not based on adequate and proper testing, or on an internationally recognized methodology.²² ORA does not suggest that an SEV is an advertisement. ORA does suggest that a government which sells Clean Energy Credits to businesses on the strength of the word *non-emitting* should be able to meet the same standard it expects of everyone else.

ORA Recommendation 7: Delete "emission intensity" as the comparison test. Replace it with full lifecycle greenhouse gas accounting that includes construction, land conversion, operations, reservoir surface diffusion, bubbling from sediments, degassing at the powerhouse and spillway, and downstream emissions, over the full lifecycle of the dam.

ORA Recommendation 8: Define the word "clean" in the SEV by reference to full lifecycle emissions determined using internationally recognized methods, or remove the word. An undefined term cannot support an environmental comparison, and no resource should be described as clean in an SEV on the basis of what comes out of a smokestack alone.

ORA Recommendation 9: The SEV should state that MEM will not describe or treat any energy resource as clean or non-emitting, including hydroelectricity, unless its greenhouse gas emissions have been directly measured, not modelled or assumed, and publicly reported. Consistent with the position ORA filed with the United Nations on the Article 6.4 methodology, an emission that has not been measured must be treated as unquantified rather than negligible, and every new energy project must be assessed on its full lifecycle emissions. Energy for Generations does not meet that standard today and should be corrected.

3.2 Small Dams Are Not Small Emitters



This is not a problem confined to large projects. Ontario's current Long Lead-Time Request for Proposals accepts hydroelectric proposals of 1 MW and above. Shallow reservoirs release more methane for each square metre of surface than deep ones, because the water-sediment interface where methane is produced sits close to the surface and the gas escapes before it can be oxidized.²³ Research on the sediment trapped behind small dams found that *more methane than previously believed bubbles out of the water behind small dams*, and that the many small dams on the world's rivers make an important contribution to greenhouse gases.^{24, 14, 25}

So, the smallest projects in Ontario's procurement can carry the highest emissions for each unit of energy delivered, while contributing the least to supply and fragmenting the most river kilometres. Under an emission intensity test, this government would score all of them zero.

These are not hypothetical facilities, and Ontario already has a century of evidence. Ontario Power Generation's Coniston Generating Station was built in 1905, Matabitchuan has been producing power for 115 years, and Stinson was built in 1925. Their reservoirs have been generating methane for more than a hundred years. All three are now being rebuilt to run for approximately another 80 to 90 years.²⁶ A century of emissions already released, and another century committed, from stations whose combined output is measured in single-digit megawatts. Coniston and Stinson together will produce roughly 12 MW, up from about 8 MW, and Matabitchuan will rise to 12 MW from 7.5 MW.²⁶

Size is also the wrong way to think about the damage. Small hydroelectric projects are rarely built alone. They are often built in cascading series of three or four on the same river, so a set of small facilities spoils far more river kilometres than a single larger facility on a river with the flow to support it.²⁷ More small dams means more reservoirs, more methane, and more healthy rivers lost.

Reservoirs also manufacture methylmercury, in the same place and by the same process that produces the methane. The headpond behind the dam floods soil and vegetation. Microbes decomposing that biomass in the low-oxygen water convert inorganic mercury into methylmercury, the form that accumulates in fish and in the people who eat them. A four-year study of a working hydroelectric reservoir found that methylation in the water column of the reservoir itself was the major source of the methylmercury present.²⁸ In a controlled experiment, flooding turned a wetland into a source of methylmercury 39 times larger than before, alongside large increases in carbon dioxide and methane.²⁹ The contamination is therefore in the headpond, in the fish that live in it, and in the water carried downstream.

It lasts for decades, and the independent evidence is the clearest. Federal and academic researchers at the Experimental Lakes Area tracked methylmercury through the flooding of an experimental reservoir and documented its rise and slow decline over years, not months.³⁰ Work on hydroelectric reservoirs in northern Manitoba found mercury in fish elevated for 20 to 30 years after impoundment.³¹ Brownlee Reservoir on the Snake River, created in 1958, is still listed by the State of Idaho as impaired for mercury, and high mercury in fish tissue has been documented there since the 1960s.^{32, 33} A United States Geological Survey led team sampling that reservoir between 2016 and 2019, nearly sixty years after the dam was built, described it as *a mercury (Hg)-impaired hydroelectric reservoir where methylmercury (MeHg) contamination in fish is a concern*.²⁸

Calling a project run-of-river does not avoid the problem either. A 2024 study of two run-of-river stations on the Saint-Maurice River recorded an unpredicted increase in methylmercury in predator fish after construction. The pondages behind the stations acted as sedimentation basins,



collecting mercury and organic matter from a watershed already disturbed by forest fire and logging.³⁴ The effect appeared only because someone examined the watershed as a whole. That is a cumulative effect, and no single project assessment was required to look for it.

Mitigation should not be assumed either. The same four-year reservoir study found methylmercury being produced under nitrate- and manganese-reducing conditions that were previously thought to preclude it, and concluded that mitigation by nitrate or manganese amendment *may be unsuccessful in some locations*.²⁸ A 40-year contract therefore covers a period in which the fish may never fully recover, and there is no proven way to switch the process off once the reservoir is filled.

More than 90 percent of potential new Canadian hydroelectric projects would increase methylmercury exposure in Indigenous communities downstream.³⁶ Communities on the reservoir itself are exposed as well, because the headpond is where the methylation occurs, and the contaminated fish live.²⁹ Fish is a staple food in many of those communities. An SEV for the ministry that directs these projects into procurement should say so.

ORA Recommendation 10: The SEV should commit MEM to recognize, and to disclose to affected communities before any agreement is signed, that hydroelectric reservoirs generate greenhouse gas emissions and methylmercury contamination of fish, a staple food in many Indigenous communities. This commitment should apply to every hydroelectric proposal MEM directs into procurement or otherwise supports, at every size of facility, including those below 10 MW. Communities being asked to enter long-term partnerships in these projects are entitled to the full picture, positive and negative, before they decide.

3.3 Define "Temporary"

The draft carries forward the statement that MEM will undertake planning that recognizes *mineral development as a temporary land use*.⁶ ORA asks the ministry to define temporary.

A tailings facility must be managed, monitored and kept structurally sound after the mine closes, and there is no date on which that obligation ends. Acid rock drainage from exposed sulphide rock can continue to generate acid and mobilize metals for centuries. Water treatment at a closed mine site does not stop when the ore runs out. On a human timescale these are not temporary land uses. They are permanent commitments handed to people who will never see a cent of the revenue.

ORA has made submissions on the Great Bear Gold Project, the Crawford Nickel Project, the Upper Beaver Gold Project and the Ring of Fire. In each case the receiving environment is a river in a watershed, and in each case the obligations outlast the mine. On Crawford, the proponent's own modelling predicted exceedances at the waste rock seepage face for a list of parameters including cobalt, selenium, uranium, vanadium and nitrate, with effluent treatment deferred to a future provincial approval. Mining projects end. The environmental effects, and the responsibility for them, fall to communities for many generations.

Closure plans do not close that gap. Part VII of the *Mining Act* requires a closure plan and financial assurance before advanced exploration or production.³⁶ But the assurance is sized to an estimate of rehabilitation, not to an open-ended commitment to retain tailings dams and treat seepage for as long as treatment is needed. And since the *Building More Mines Act, 2023*, a proponent may post that assurance in phases tied to construction rather than in full at the outset.³⁷ Where the estimate falls short, or the company is gone, the cost falls to the province. The province is funded



by taxpayers, so it falls on the backs of Ontario taxpayers, and it falls on them for as long as the site needs managing.

Ontario's mining SEV should also name the standard that applies to the structures that outlast the mine. The Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management was published in 2020 and is the recognized international benchmark.³⁸

ORA Recommendation 11: Define "temporary" in the SEV or remove the word. Where a decision creates an obligation to manage, monitor or treat a site with no fixed end date, the SEV should commit MEM to describe that obligation as a long-term or perpetual one, and to identify who carries it.

ORA Recommendation 12: The SEV should commit MEM to require financial assurance sufficient to cover closure, rehabilitation, retention of dams and tailings ponds, and water treatment for as long as treatment is needed, and not only for a fixed post-closure period or a phased construction schedule.

ORA Recommendation 13: The SEV should name the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management as the benchmark MEM applies to tailings facilities.

4. Who Pays, and For How Long

The draft says MEM will consider effects on current and future generations. It does not say whether MEM will find out what those effects cost or reveal that cost to anyone.

Hydroelectric contracts run for 40 years. The dams, and their negative environmental effects, last far longer.

Ontario Power Generation has been redeveloping three of its oldest hydroelectric stations: Coniston Generating Station, built in 1905 on the Wanapitei River east of Sudbury; Stinson Generating Station, built upstream in 1925; and Matabitchuan Generating Station, southeast of Cobalt, which has been producing power for 115 years. OPG states that once the work is complete, these projects *will ensure continued safe and reliable operations at these sites for approximately an additional 80 to 90 years.*²⁶ Its Kakabeka Falls Generating Station on the Kaministiquia River, commissioned in 1906, is being redeveloped to run for roughly another 90 years.³⁹

Add the arithmetic. A station built in 1905 and rebuilt to run 80 to 90 more years is a dam on that river for close to two hundred years. A decision taken in 2026 therefore commits ratepayers, and the river, into the twenty-second century. Nothing in the draft requires MEM to look that far ahead, and nothing requires it to tell the public what the commitment costs, financially or environmentally. Over that period the water is going the wrong way. Statistics Canada reported that hydroelectricity was *the largest contributor to the national decline in electricity generation in 2023*, down 8.4 percent.⁴⁰ Manitoba Hydro posted an audited net loss of \$157 million from drought in 2023-24 and a further \$63 million loss in 2024-25, \$220 million over two years.^{41,42} Canada's Changing Climate Report projects reduced snowpack, earlier spring runoff and altered seasonal flows.⁴³

Ontario's own assessment is blunt about where the risk sits. The Ontario Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment (OPCCIA) found that *the highest risks across all sub-categories were found to be for electrical power generation infrastructure*, that those risks are high now and are



expected to remain high for all future time periods, and that *low water flows due to drought conditions can reduce hydroelectricity generation efficiency or outputs*.⁴⁴

The same assessment projects more intense rainfall and more frequent flooding. Both directions of that swing are a problem for a dam. Extreme rainfall raises the risk of overtopping and failure, and of flooding upstream of a headpond and downstream of a release. Drought reduces the energy the ratepayer has already agreed to buy. Ontario is contracting for a fuel that is becoming less reliable in the same decades that the payments come due.

The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) has already said as much, in writing. In its May 2026 North of Sudbury Bulk Plan presentation, the IESO advised that *a large share of supply resources in the area is hydroelectric, which is energy-limited and cannot be relied on at full output in all hours*, and that hydroelectric resources *cannot be relied on to meet demand in all hours or conditions*.⁴⁵ So the province's own electricity planner does not treat hydroelectricity as firm, dependable baseload power. MEM should not write an SEV that assumes otherwise, and ratepayers should not be asked to pay for a century of capacity that the operator has already qualified.

Mining carries the same shape of risk in a different form. Rehabilitation and long-term water treatment obligations survive the company that created them, and when a company does not survive, the public pays.

ORA Recommendation 14: The SEV should commit MEM to consider, and to publish, the long-term cost to ratepayers and taxpayers of a decision over the full operating lifecycle of the asset and over the period of any post-closure obligation, before the decision is made.

ORA Recommendation 15: The SEV should commit MEM to test energy supply decisions against reduced-water and drought conditions and against extreme rainfall and flood conditions, using the Ontario Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment.

5. Energy

The four energy commitments in section 3 of the draft each represent a downgrade from the current statement.^{6,4}

First, effects on current and future generations are now measured against "the long-term goal of delivering an affordable, secure, reliable, and clean energy system," replacing "principles of sustainable development." The benchmark has moved from the environment to the ministry.

Second, MEM will "compare environmental benefits, and risks." The current statement requires the Ministry to "consider and evaluate environmental costs, benefits, and risks." Costs have been removed, and evaluation has been reduced to comparison.

Third, climate change has been narrowed from Ontario to the grid. The current statement commits the Ministry to consider "the opportunities and threats from climate change to Ontario's environment, and people's health, safety, and prosperity," and to improve "our understanding of how climate change will impact Ontario." The draft commits MEM only to consider "how climate change will impact the energy system" and whether system resiliency can help Ontarians prepare. Climate risk to rivers, to water supply, to fish and to communities has been removed. Only risk to the ministry's own assets survives.



Ontario already holds the best available authority on this question. The province commissioned the Ontario Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment, the most comprehensive assessment of how climate change will affect Ontario's economy, infrastructure, communities, health and ecosystems.⁴⁴ Having paid for that work, MEM now proposes to narrow its own climate commitment to the operation of the energy system. Ontario's best evidence on climate risk is being treated as an obstacle to the plan rather than as an input to it.

Fourth, the commitment to reduce emissions is gone. "Continuing to do our share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions" has become "compare the emission intensity of different energy resources." A duty to act has become a duty to compare.

5.1 The Public Has No Guaranteed Say on a Waterpower Project

This section of the SEV carries more weight than the ministry may realize, because there is no reliable public consultation downstream of it.

New waterpower facilities are assessed under the Class Environmental Assessment for Waterpower Projects (Class EA). The minimum category for a new waterpower facility is Category B, which requires a proponent self-screening rather than a comprehensive environmental assessment. The consultation that follows is designed by the proponent: the Class EA directs the proponent to develop *public consultation and Indigenous engagement plans, as appropriate*.⁴⁶ The proponent decides what is appropriate.

So public consultation on a waterpower proposal is not guaranteed by the Class EA, and it is not guaranteed by any other process that follows a procurement MEM has directed. If it is not secured at the policy and directive stage, where the SEV applies, it may not be secured at all. That is precisely the gap an SEV exists to close.

Finally, the SEV should require MEM to compare resources honestly. The IESO's own Hybrid Resource Portfolio Equivalency Assessment found that a wind, solar and battery portfolio met need in every weather year modelled, serving 99.50 to 99.98 percent of load, and can provide both baseload and peak power.⁴⁷ A ministry that commits in its SEV to comparing resources should be comparing against that evidence, and against the public interest.

ORA Recommendation 16: Restore the deleted energy commitments: consideration of the opportunities and threats from climate change to Ontario's environment and to people's health, safety and prosperity; the commitment to improve understanding of how climate change will affect Ontario; and the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

ORA Recommendation 17: Restore "costs" to the list of matters MEM will evaluate, and restore the word "evaluate" in place of "consider."

ORA Recommendation 18: The SEV should commit MEM to secure meaningful public and Indigenous consultation at the policy and directive stage for waterpower, recognizing that the Class Environmental Assessment for Waterpower Projects leaves the design of consultation to the proponent.

ORA Recommendation 19: The SEV should commit MEM to compare all available resource options, including wind, solar, battery storage and energy efficiency, on the same basis and



against the IESO's own published analysis, before directing the procurement of new hydroelectric generation.

ORA Recommendation 20: The draft commits MEM to best practices for closure plans and rehabilitation in the mining sector. It should make the equivalent commitment for hydroelectricity: best practices for fish passage and connectivity, flow and water level management, sediment management, reservoir greenhouse gas and methylmercury monitoring, and decommissioning with financial assurance at the end of the contract term. There is no reason the energy sector should be held to a lower standard than the mining sector in the same document.

6. Mining

The three mining commitments in the draft are an improvement in one respect and a retreat in several others.^{6, 5}

The improvement is real, and ORA acknowledges it. The draft adds best practices for closure plans and rehabilitation, adds mineral exploration to the activities covered, and adds long-term monitoring and the circular economy. Those are useful additions and they should be kept.

The retreat is in what was dropped. The current statement requires *an understanding of the ecological, physical, social, cultural and economic impacts of development on a project-by-project basis*. The draft removes the project-by-project requirement. It also removes the mining commitment to *evaluate opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or enhance Ontario's resilience to a changing climate*, replacing it with mitigation of climate impacts as *appropriate*.^{5, 6}

What is absent matters more. The mining section says nothing about water taking, nothing about tailings dam safety, nothing about seepage or effluent, nothing about acid rock drainage, nothing about fish habitat, and nothing about cumulative effects in a watershed. These are the issues that arise in every mining file ORA has worked on.

ORA Recommendation 21: The mining section of the SEV should address water taking and dewatering, tailings storage and dam safety, seepage and effluent quality, acid rock drainage, effects on fish and fish habitat, and cumulative effects within the receiving watershed over the full life of the project and beyond it, including the period in which tailings ponds and seepage must still be managed after closure.

ORA Recommendation 22: Restore the requirement to understand the ecological, physical, social, cultural and economic impacts of mineral development on a project-by-project basis, and restore the commitment to evaluate opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience.

7. Consultation Is the Point of the Act

Public participation is not a courtesy the Act extends. It is one of the reasons the Act exists. The *Environmental Bill of Rights* provides *the means by which residents of Ontario may participate in the making of environmentally significant decisions by the Government of Ontario and increased accountability of the Government of Ontario for its environmental decision making*.³



The draft narrows both. The current statements say consultation is how the Ministry assesses *the impacts of decisions that may significantly affect the environment*. The draft says consultation is how MEM assesses *whether potential decisions might significantly affect the environment*.^{4, 5, 6} That moves the public off the substance of a decision and onto the screening question of whether the public gets a say at all.

The draft also changes who is consulted. *Affected communities* become *the public, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and energy and mines stakeholders and partners*. And two specific commitments have been deleted outright: the commitment to consider *affected communities' concerns about environmental impacts and climate change, and the costs and benefits of regulation*, and the commitment to engage *with affected communities in their preferred language, wherever feasible*.^{4, 5, 6}

The language commitment matters in Northern Ontario. Many of the communities most affected by mining and hydroelectric decisions are First Nations and francophone communities. Removing a commitment to engage in a community's own language, in a document that is supposed to record the ministry's environmental values, is not an administrative tidy-up.

ORA Recommendation 23: Restore the commitment to consult on the impacts of decisions, not merely on whether a decision might significantly affect the environment.

ORA Recommendation 24: Restore the commitment to consider affected communities' concerns about environmental impacts and climate change, and restore the commitment to engage with affected communities in their preferred language wherever feasible.

8. Indigenous Rights

ORA credits one addition. The draft states that MEM *recognizes the value of Indigenous knowledge systems and will seek to incorporate them into environmental decision-making where appropriate*. That commitment should be kept, and the qualifier *where appropriate* should be removed.⁶

Two changes go the other way. First, the legal threshold has moved. Both current statements refer to *established or asserted* Aboriginal or treaty rights. The draft refers to *proven or credibly asserted* rights.^{4, 5, 6} Proof and credibility are tests, and under this wording the Crown applies them to itself before deciding whether the duty arises.

That is not what the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) calls for. The Declaration requires governments to consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous peoples in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting measures that may affect them, and before approving any project affecting their lands, territories and resources, particularly in connection with the development or exploitation of mineral and water resources.⁴⁸ Canada has given the Declaration statutory effect in federal law.⁴⁹ A ministry responsible for mineral and water resources should be moving toward that standard, not away from it.

Second, a protection has been deleted. Both current statements end the Indigenous section with the sentence: *This commitment is not intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation the province may have with respect to the duty to consult*. That sentence does not appear in the



draft.^{4, 5, 6} Its removal, alongside a narrower threshold, invites the reading that the SEV now defines the limit of the duty rather than sitting beneath it.

The draft is also internally inconsistent. One paragraph refers to "proven or credibly asserted Aboriginal and/or treaty rights" and the next refers simply to "Aboriginal or treaty rights." Two different formulations two paragraphs apart cannot both be the standard MEM applies.

ORA Recommendation 25: Replace "proven or credibly asserted" with "established or asserted," and use one consistent formulation throughout the section.

ORA Recommendation 26: Restore the sentence confirming that the SEV does not alter or detract from any constitutional obligation of the province with respect to the duty to consult.

ORA Recommendation 27: Commit in the SEV to seek the free, prior and informed consent of affected Indigenous communities, consistent with Articles 19 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for decisions affecting their lands, territories, waters and resources.

9. This Did Not Happen in Isolation

ORA raises the following in passing, because it is the context in which this draft has to be read. The AG has now tracked, over three decades, what the AG describes as the *trend in ministry actions eroding the public's rights under the EBR*, counting cases of no consultation, incomplete consultation, exemptions created from the *Environmental Bill of Rights*, and findings by the Divisional Court that the government contravened the Act. The trend is growing.²

In the last three years alone: the *Building More Mines Act, 2023* regulations were made with an SEV consideration that the AG found *did not reflect the analysis necessary to meaningfully inform decision-making*;⁵⁰ comprehensive environmental assessment moved to a project list approach, allowing more projects to follow a streamlined assessment, with an SEV consideration that did not explain how that follows a precautionary approach;⁵⁰ the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* was repealed and replaced by the *Species Conservation Act, 2025* with a registration-first approach;⁵¹ and Bill 17 was passed *before EBR consultation on the bill was complete, and before ministries could consider all public comments*.²

Against that record, an SEV that removes sustainable development, removes the commitment to reduce emissions, removes the language commitment to affected communities, and weakens the Indigenous rights threshold is not a housekeeping exercise. It is the same direction of travel, applied to the one document that is supposed to hold the line.

ORA Recommendation 28: The SEV should state that MEM will not seek or rely on exemptions from the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* for decisions that might significantly affect the environment, and will ensure full and rigorous public consultation before a decision is made.

10. "Merged" Is Not What Happened

10.1 The Notice Describes Deletions as a Merger



The Registry notice tells the public that content from the climate change section *has merged* with the application section.¹ A reader would take that to mean the commitments survive in a new location. They do not. The following commitments exist in the statements in force today and do not exist in the draft.

Commitment in force today	In the draft
"consistent with principles of sustainable development"	Deleted
"Continuing to do our share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions"	Deleted
"improving our understanding of how climate change will impact Ontario and helping Ontarians prepare"	Narrowed to impacts on "the energy system"
"endeavour to support local climate change solutions and community resilience"	Deleted
Collaboration with individuals, businesses, communities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous communities	Deleted
Climate threats to "people's health, safety, and prosperity"	Deleted
"considering affected communities' concerns about environmental impacts and climate change"	Deleted
"engaging with affected communities in their preferred language, wherever feasible"	Deleted
"This commitment is not intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation the province may have with respect to the duty to consult"	Deleted
"committed to reducing its environmental footprint" and greening among "partners, stakeholders and suppliers"	Deleted
Mines: "strong, safe and sustainable minerals industry"	"strong, safe and responsible"
Mines: impacts of development "on a project-by-project basis"	Deleted
"evaluate"	Replaced by "consider"
"ensure that decisions ... are evidence-based"	"consider evidence-based actions"

ORA Recommendation 29: Publish a version of the draft that shows every addition and every deletion against both current statements, extend the comment period, and repost. The



public cannot comment meaningfully on a proposal whose Registry notice describes deletions as a merger.

10.2 There Is No Prescribed "Ministry of Energy and Mines"

The draft states that the Act requires a Statement of Environmental Values from all prescribed ministries *as stated in Part I of Ontario Regulation 73/94*.⁶ That is correct, but Part I of that regulation does not name a Ministry of Energy and Mines.

As consolidated to March 30, 2026, with an e-Laws currency date of July 31, 2026 and a last amendment of O. Reg. 63/26, section 1 of O. Reg. 73/94 prescribes the *Ministry of Energy* at paragraph 4 and the *Ministry of Mines* at paragraph 10.2, as separate ministries. Section 2, which applies section 15 of the Act to proposals for policies and acts, lists them separately in the same way. Section 5, which applies the application for review provisions, prescribes the Ministry of Energy at paragraph 3 and the Ministry of Mines at paragraph 6.2. Section 4, which applies the instrument provisions, prescribes the Ministry of Mines and does not prescribe the Ministry of Energy at all.⁷

Two ministries are prescribed. The *Environmental Bill of Rights* requires an SEV from each prescribed ministry. MEM is proposing one statement, for a ministry the regulation does not name, to replace two statements belonging to ministries the regulation still does name. On the face of the regulation, the document now out for comment is not the SEV of any prescribed ministry.

This cannot be waved through as a naming detail. The government amended O. Reg. 73/94 as recently as O. Reg. 63/26 in 2026, adding the *Species Conservation Act, 2025* to the Acts prescribed for regulations and for applications for review, and revoking several provisions.⁷ It had the opportunity to update the list of prescribed ministries at the same time and did not take it. The AG recommended this SEV update in December 2025, and MEM agreed to it. Fourteen months after the two ministries were combined, the regulation that decides who owes Ontarians an SEV has still not been changed.²

ORA Recommendation 30: Amend O. Reg. 73/94 to prescribe the Ministry of Energy and Mines, and post that amendment for public comment, before finalizing any consolidated Statement of Environmental Values. Until that is done, the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Mines each remain prescribed ministries, and each requires its own Statement of Environmental Values under the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*.

11. The Auditor General Asked for This. This Is Not What She Asked For.

In December 2025 the AG recommended that MEM, by July 2026, review its Statement of Environmental Values, post a proposal notice, *consult the public in accordance with the requirements of the EBR about the proposed updates, and consider any comments on the proposed update submitted by the public*, and then post a decision notice *explaining the effect of public participation on the ministry's decision-making in updating the SEV*.²

MEM agreed. Its written response was that *the Ministry is working to update the SEV to reflect its current mandate and current government priorities*.²

Government priorities are not environmental values. The *Environmental Bill of Rights* does not ask a ministry to write down what it wants to do. It asks the ministry to write down how the



purposes of the Act will be applied when it makes decisions that might significantly affect the environment. Those are different documents, and the draft is the wrong one.

The AG's findings on how MEM's predecessor ministries actually used their statements are directly relevant. In her 2025 audit, she found that for 23 percent of the decisions sampled, the ministry either could not produce any documentation of SEV consideration, or produced documentation that was undated or dated after the decision was made. The Environment, Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs, Mining and Energy Ministries *were each responsible for at least one decision for which proof of SEV consideration could not be provided*. In a further 14 percent of cases, *all for decisions by the Mining Ministry*, the documentation did not show that all applicable SEV principles had been considered.²

In her 2024 audit, she examined the Mining Ministry's SEV consideration for the regulatory amendments implementing the *Building More Mines Act, 2023* and found it *did not reflect the analysis necessary to meaningfully inform decision-making*. The AG measured that failure against two specific clauses of the Mining Ministry's SEV: the commitment to *balanc[e] environmental values and other relevant considerations by comparing environmental impacts with other impacts to communities, to Ontarians, and to future generations of Ontarians*, and the commitment that the decision be *evidence based*.⁵⁰

Both of those clauses are weakened in this draft. *Comparing* environmental impacts with other impacts becomes *considering potential environmental impacts alongside other potential social and economic impacts*. And *will work to ensure that decisions ... are evidence-based* becomes *will consider evidence-based actions that achieve positive outcomes for Ontarians*.^{4, 5, 6}

A ministry found by the AG to have fallen short against two clauses of its own SEV should not respond by softening those two clauses. It should respond by meeting them, and by making its compliance visible.

ORA Recommendation 31: Restore the requirement that MEM will compare environmental impacts with other impacts to communities, to Ontarians and to future generations of Ontarians.

ORA Recommendation 32: Restore and strengthen the evidence commitment. The SEV should state that MEM will ensure that decisions that may significantly affect the environment are science-based and evidence-based, not merely that MEM will consider evidence-based actions.

ORA Recommendation 33: Strengthen section 8 of the draft. MEM should publish its SEV consideration for every environmentally significant decision at the same time as the decision notice on the Environmental Registry, dated to show it was prepared before the decision was made, and should report annually on how the SEV was applied.

ORA Recommendation 34: Commit in the SEV to review it at least every five years, with public consultation on the Registry.

ORA Recommendation 35: When MEM finalizes this update, post a decision notice that explains the effect of public participation on the ministry's decision-making, as the Auditor General recommended and as MEM agreed to do.



12. Summary of Recommendations

ORA Recommendation 1: Revise the draft so that each operative section states how a purpose set out in section 2 of the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*, will be applied to MEM decisions, rather than reciting those purposes in the introduction and omitting them from the body.

ORA Recommendation 2: Name water. Section 3 of the SEV should commit MEM to consider effects on rivers, lakes, wetlands, groundwater, flow regimes, water levels, water quality, water quantity, fish, fish habitat and fish passage whenever it makes a decision that might significantly affect the environment.

ORA Recommendation 3: Name biological diversity and ecological systems as matters MEM will consider, in the words used by section 2 of the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993*.

ORA Recommendation 4: To protect the public's right to a healthful and sustainable environment, commit MEM in the SEV to consider the cumulative effects of its decisions on a watershed basis, together with the effects of existing and reasonably foreseeable projects, rather than assessing each proposal in isolation.

ORA Recommendation 5: Restore the words "consistent with principles of sustainable development" to the operative provisions of the SEV and restore the commitment to a sustainable minerals industry.

ORA Recommendation 6: Remove the ministry's own energy supply objective as the benchmark for assessing effects on current and future generations. A Statement of Environmental Values must measure decisions against environmental purposes, not against the ministry's business plan.

ORA Recommendation 7: Delete "emission intensity" as the comparison test. Replace it with full lifecycle greenhouse gas accounting that includes construction, land conversion, operations, reservoir surface diffusion, bubbling from sediments, degassing at the powerhouse and spillway, and downstream emissions, over the full lifecycle of the dam.

ORA Recommendation 8: Define the word "clean" in the SEV by reference to full lifecycle emissions determined using internationally recognized methods or remove the word. An undefined term cannot support an environmental comparison, and no resource should be described as clean in an SEV on the basis of what comes out of a smokestack alone.

ORA Recommendation 9: The SEV should state that MEM will not describe or treat any energy resource as clean or non-emitting, including hydroelectricity, unless its greenhouse gas emissions have been directly measured, not modelled or assumed, and publicly reported. Consistent with the position ORA filed with the United Nations on the Article 6.4 methodology, an emission that has not been measured must be treated as unquantified rather than negligible, and every new energy project must be assessed on its full lifecycle emissions. Energy for Generations does not meet that standard today and should be corrected.

ORA Recommendation 10: The SEV should commit MEM to recognize, and to disclose to affected communities before any agreement is signed, that hydroelectric reservoirs generate greenhouse gas emissions and methylmercury contamination of fish, a staple food



in many Indigenous communities. This commitment should apply to every hydroelectric proposal MEM directs into procurement or otherwise supports, at every size of facility, including those below 10 MW. Communities being asked to enter long-term partnerships in these projects are entitled to the full picture, positive and negative, before they decide.

ORA Recommendation 11: Define "temporary" in the SEV or remove the word. Where a decision creates an obligation to manage, monitor or treat a site with no fixed end date, the SEV should commit MEM to describe that obligation as a long-term or perpetual one, and to identify who carries it.

ORA Recommendation 12: The SEV should commit MEM to require financial assurance sufficient to cover closure, rehabilitation, retention of dams and tailings ponds, and water treatment for as long as treatment is needed, and not only for a fixed post-closure period or a phased construction schedule.

ORA Recommendation 13: The SEV should name the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management as the benchmark MEM applies to tailings facilities.

ORA Recommendation 14: The SEV should commit MEM to consider, and to publish, the long-term cost to ratepayers and taxpayers of a decision over the full operating lifecycle of the asset and over the period of any post-closure obligation, before the decision is made.

ORA Recommendation 15: The SEV should commit MEM to test energy supply decisions against reduced-water and drought conditions and against extreme rainfall and flood conditions, using the Ontario Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment.

ORA Recommendation 16: Restore the deleted energy commitments: consideration of the opportunities and threats from climate change to Ontario's environment and to people's health, safety and prosperity; the commitment to improve understanding of how climate change will affect Ontario; and the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

ORA Recommendation 17: Restore "costs" to the list of matters MEM will evaluate, and restore the word "evaluate" in place of "consider."

ORA Recommendation 18: The SEV should commit MEM to secure meaningful public and Indigenous consultation at the policy and directive stage for waterpower, recognizing that the Class Environmental Assessment for Waterpower Projects leaves the design of consultation to the proponent.

ORA Recommendation 19: The SEV should commit MEM to compare all available resource options, including wind, solar, battery storage and energy efficiency, on the same basis and against the IESO's own published analysis, before directing the procurement of new hydroelectric generation.

ORA Recommendation 20: The draft commits MEM to best practices for closure plans and rehabilitation in the mining sector. It should make the equivalent commitment for hydroelectricity: best practices for fish passage and connectivity, flow and water level management, sediment management, reservoir greenhouse gas and methylmercury monitoring, and decommissioning with financial assurance at the end of the contract term. There is no reason the energy sector should be held to a lower standard than the mining sector in the same document.



ORA Recommendation 21: The mining section of the SEV should address water taking and dewatering, tailings storage and dam safety, seepage and effluent quality, acid rock drainage, effects on fish and fish habitat, and cumulative effects within the receiving watershed over the full life of the project and beyond it, including the period in which tailings ponds and seepage must still be managed after closure.

ORA Recommendation 22: Restore the requirement to understand the ecological, physical, social, cultural and economic impacts of mineral development on a project-by-project basis, and restore the commitment to evaluate opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience.

ORA Recommendation 23: Restore the commitment to consult on the impacts of decisions, not merely on whether a decision might significantly affect the environment.

ORA Recommendation 24: Restore the commitment to consider affected communities' concerns about environmental impacts and climate change, and restore the commitment to engage with affected communities in their preferred language wherever feasible.

ORA Recommendation 25: Replace "proven or credibly asserted" with "established or asserted," and use one consistent formulation throughout the section.

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ORA Recommendation 27: Commit in the SEV to seek the free, prior and informed consent of affected Indigenous communities, consistent with Articles 19 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for decisions affecting their lands, territories, waters and resources.

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ORA Recommendation 31: Restore the requirement that MEM will compare environmental impacts with other impacts to communities, to Ontarians and to future generations of Ontarians.

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science-based and evidence-based, not merely that MEM will consider evidence-based actions.

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ORA Recommendation 34: Commit in the SEV to review it at least every five years, with public consultation on the Registry.

ORA Recommendation 35: When MEM finalizes this update, post a decision notice that explains the effect of public participation on the ministry's decision-making, as the Auditor General recommended and as MEM agreed to do.

13. Closing:

A Statement of Environmental Values is the only document in which a ministry writes down, in advance and in public, what the environment is owed when it decides. It is written once, and it governs everything after; every procurement, every regulation, every instrument, every mine. Ontario is now committing ratepayers to hydroelectric contracts whose dams will still be standing, emitting methane, degrading fisheries and contaminating Ontario's waters, in the twenty-second century, and permitting mine waste that will need managing long after the ore is gone. This is the wrong moment to write a weaker one.

MEM has asked the public what it thinks of a proposal that deletes sustainable development, deletes the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, deletes the promise to speak with communities in their own language, weakens the threshold for Indigenous consultation, and does not once mention water. ORA's answer is that this draft cannot be finalized as written. It does not meet the standard the *Environmental Bill of Rights* sets, and it does not answer the Auditor General.

None of this is out of reach. ORA would like to see MEM finish this work with a Statement of Environmental Values that names water and the rivers this province depends on, that counts the full emissions of every resource it procures, that adds up effects across a watershed instead of one project at a time, that says plainly who pays and for how long, and that meets Indigenous communities at the standard the Declaration sets rather than the lowest standard the law allows.

A document like that would take nothing away from Ontario's ability to build. It would make the ministry's decisions easier to defend, and it would give the public and Indigenous communities a reason to believe the environment was weighed before a decision was made rather than justified after it. Confidence in energy and mining decisions in this province is low, and the record shows why.

A ministry that writes down real environmental and public interest values, and then shows its work when it applies them, would begin to earn that confidence back. ORA would acknowledge that publicly, as readily as it has raised these concerns.

Ontario's rivers, and the people who depend on them, are entitled to better than a document that measures the environment against the ministry's own business plan.



Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,

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