

Introduction



Nick Stavropoulos
Acting Auditor General



Dr. Tyler Schulz
Assistant Auditor General,
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Environment

The *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* (EBR Act) gives the people of Ontario the right to participate in government decisions that have the potential to affect the environment. When the EBR Act operates effectively, it supports transparency and holds ministries accountable for the government’s environmentally significant decisions. But the public’s ability to exercise their rights depends on how effectively the government and ministries exercise their responsibilities under the EBR Act.

Since 2019, the Office of the Auditor General has been required to report annually on how well ministries are meeting their obligations under the EBR Act. In that time, our Office has identified recurring issues of non-compliance and poor implementation of the EBR Act. We have found that issues can arise for several reasons: ministries don’t have effective processes to ensure that staff do what is needed; the intent of public consultation requirements is disregarded; or the EBR Act is not made a priority.

This year, while some ministries have continued to make improvements in the ways they follow and implement the EBR Act, we again found a lack of meaningful consultation on important government decisions affecting the environment.

We also found situations where ministries did not use the Environmental Registry to fully explain the potential environmental implications of proposed legislative or policy changes, or how public consultation affected the decision-making.

As the administrator of the EBR Act, it is important that the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks demonstrates leadership and champion the EBR Act. But for the fifth year, we found that this Ministry did little to provide educational programs about the EBR Act to the public since being assigned that responsibility in 2019.

As our Office has previously observed, embracing the intent of the EBR Act and following transparent and meaningful consultation will help government make informed, long-term environmental decisions that benefit all Ontarians, while building public understanding and support for these decisions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Stavropoulos'.

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Acting Auditor General

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Schulz'.

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