

# SEEA Process Bulletin 2026-3: ECCC Review of Environmental Effects

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***This bulletin supersedes and replaces SEEA Process Bulletin 2024-2***

As noted in the Cabinet Directive on Strategic Environmental and Economic Assessment (SEEA), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) may review SEEAs of proposals and challenge departments and agencies on the quality of their environmental analysis (SEEA section 3.3.3). Strategically applying ECCC expertise to proposals across departments supports decision-makers and fosters credible and consistent information on environmental impacts.

## Identifying Proposals for Review by ECCC

The Climate, Nature and Economy Lens (CNEL) preliminary screening questions 1 through 5 establish the basic criteria for environmental analysis. When an important environmental effect is identified in one or more areas of the preliminary screening, a detailed analysis is required by the originating department. Considerations for when an environmental effect may be considered important in the context of the CNEL preliminary screening questions are provided in Annex A to this bulletin.

A subset of CNELs, those noting potentially consequential and far-reaching impacts on the environment, should be shared with ECCC for further review. Considerations for determining whether a CNEL should be shared with ECCC for further review include the following:

### Risk to the Environment

ECCC **may review** a CNEL where the originating department, a central agency, or ECCC have reasonable grounds to believe the proposal poses a significant risk to the environment.

### Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

ECCC **will review** a CNEL where the originating department, a central agency, or ECCC have reasonable grounds to believe that the proposal's net effect on Canada's GHG emissions, positive or negative, would be **0.5 megatonnes (Mt)** of carbon dioxide equivalent or more in any year.

- Note that 0.5 Mt is a relatively high threshold, equivalent to the emissions produced by 100,000 typical gasoline-powered automobiles in a year, and it is unlikely to be crossed by proposals that do not have large effects on high-emitting sectors. Where there is uncertainty on the emission impacts of a proposal, advice can be sought from ECCC.
- Where feasible, ECCC will model GHG claims of 1.0 Mt or greater.

### Resilience to Climate Change

ECCC **may review** a CNEL that indicates that a proposal will “implement direct measures to increase Canada's resilience to climate change” (CNEL Question A-511).

### Links to Environmental Commitments

ECCC **may review** a CNEL for a proposal that is named in or directly implements elements of a federal environmental plan, strategy, or international commitment or which makes significant quantitative or qualitative contributions to environmental goals or targets therein.

### Public Profile

ECCC **may review** a CNEL where the environmental effects, either positive or negative, are likely to attract high or sustained attention from the public, Indigenous groups, other levels of government, or stakeholders.

### Identification by a Department or Central Agency

ECCC **will review** a CNEL when review is requested by the originating department or agency or by the responsible central agency.

## **ECCC Review Approach**

ECCC's review of a CNEL will focus on accuracy, clarity, and credibility based on the information provided or otherwise available to ECCC.







ECCC will aim to complete its review within five business days of receipt of a CNEL. Timelines may be extended if GHG modelling is required.

## **Additional Resources**

For additional resources and guidance, drafters should contact the SEEA experts within their department or agency. Questions from SEEA experts can be directed to the SEEA Secretariat at ECCC at [ees-seea@ec.gc.ca](mailto:ees-seea@ec.gc.ca).

## ANNEX A – Identifying Important Effects

In adherence to Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of SEEA and in responding to the preliminary screening questions in the CNEL, proposal leads are responsible for **determining whether important environmental and economic effects are likely to arise from the proposal**. When assessing whether any environmental effects may be considered important, proposal leads should consider the following:

	<b>Frequency and duration</b> Will the effect be a one-time-only occurrence? Will it be a short-term or long-term effect?
	<b>Location and magnitude</b> What is the anticipated scale of the effect? Will it be local, regional, national, or international in scope?
	<b>Timing</b> Is the effect likely to occur at a time that is sensitive to a particular environmental feature?
	<b>Risk</b> Is there an elevated level of risk associated with the effect, such as exposure of humans or flora and fauna to contaminants, pollution, climate extremes, or a high risk of accident?
	<b>Irreversibility</b> Is the effect likely to be irreversible?
	<b>Cumulative nature</b> Is the effect likely to combine with other effects in the region in a way that could threaten a particular environmental component?

Important environmental effects should be determined at a departmental and agency level and applied consistently across each organization. Important environmental effects should also be contextualized in terms of strategic importance, specifically, relevance to federal legislation, departmental plans, Cabinet and ministerial priorities, Indigenous Peoples, and stakeholder concerns.

<b>Cabinet and Ministerial Priorities</b>	Departments and agencies should consider ministerial and cabinet priorities when deciding if an environmental effect is important. Importance should be placed on environmental effects that align with relevant government priorities, as outlined in mandate letters and the Speech from the Throne. Relevant frameworks, national strategies, budget announcements, and legislation provide further indicators of government priorities.
<b>Departmental Priorities</b>	Departments and agencies should consider environmental effects in the context of departmental priorities, as outlined in Departmental Plans. Importance should be placed on environmental effects that are outlined as departmental priorities or that have an expected outcome that conflicts with departmental priorities.

<b>Statutes</b>	<p>Departments and agencies should consider the potential legal implications of the proposal. Environmental effects that violate relevant legislation or international treaties and agreements should be considered important. Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to acts administered by ECCC, such as the <i>Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999</i> (CEPA), the <i>Species at Risk Act</i> (SARA), and the <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i> (FSDA).</p>
<b>Indigenous Perspectives</b>	<p>Departments and agencies should consider the importance of environmental effects on Indigenous Peoples. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives on environmental effects or ensuring respect for Indigenous climate leadership aligns with reconciliation objectives and allows departments and agencies to gain local and traditional Indigenous knowledge about likely environmental effects. It also allows departments and agencies to address concerns about the proposal that could otherwise lead to delays or require further analysis in the future. Sources of information on Indigenous priorities include ongoing consultation processes in the department and engagement with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and other Indigenous groups.</p>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<p>Departments and agencies should consider the importance of environmental effects on those most likely to be affected by the proposal, those with a vested interest in the proposal, and the public. Considering stakeholder positions on environmental effects allows departments and agencies to address public concerns about a proposal that could otherwise lead to delays or the need for further analysis later in the process.</p> <p>Sources of information on stakeholder positions and priorities include previous or ongoing public consultation mechanisms in the department, non-governmental organizations, and experts outside the Government of Canada. The views of provincial, territorial, and municipal governments may also be relevant.</p>