THE SUSTAINABLE FOREST DEVELOPMENT ACT REQUIRES THE MINISTÈRE DES FORÊTS, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS TO PREPARE AND PUBLISH A CONSULTATION POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST DEVELOPMENT AND FOREST MANAGEMENT ORIENTATIONS.

THE PURPOSE OF THE POLICY:

• To promote and facilitate participation by citizens, as individuals or on behalf of a group or organization, in consultations on the orientations for sustainable forest development and forest management, so that the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs’s decisions better reflect their interests, values and needs.

• To provide guidelines for consultations on sustainable forest development and forest management issues, among other things by presenting:
  • the topics covered;
  • a consultation process adjusted to the topics addressed or the people and organizations consulted;
  • separate consultation procedures for Aboriginal communities.

WHY IS A NEW POLICY NEEDED?

The current policy dates back to 2003. The new Draft Consultation Policy for Sustainable Forest Development and Forest Management Orientations reflects the new legal context created in 2010 by the introduction of the Sustainable Forest Development Act, as well as the experience gained through past consultations, and the availability of new technologies and consultation methods adjusted to target audiences.
THE DRAFT POLICY SETS OUT:

• the general principles;
• the scope;
• the participants;
• the topics covered;
• the main steps in the consultation process;
• the financial support granted (where applicable);
• monitoring and reporting requirements.

General principles (p. 4)
These are the main principles that will guide and provide a basis for the consultation procedure: the principles of openness, accessibility, transparency, flexibility, respect and user-friendliness.

Participants (p. 5)
Public consultations are open to everyone: to every organization, community and individual concerned, in Québec.

Consultation topics (p. 5)
The public may be consulted on a host of different topics. The policy gives examples of the types of subjects on which consultations may be held, divided according to whether they are provincial or regional in scope:

• Where the population of the entire province or several of its regions are concerned, the consultation is provincial in scope. Examples of topics for provincial consultations include:
  • guidelines for the preparation of a draft law or regulation, or major amendments to a current law or regulation;
  • general policies or strategies, or amendments, covering elements relating to timber production, integrated resource management and protection of biodiversity;
  • delineation, or modification, of the territorial boundary south of which sustainable forest development activities are permitted.
• Other topics are regional in scope and are implemented locally. Consultations on these topics are more local in scope, or are confined to particular regions. Examples of topics that are regional in scope include:
  • territorial delimitations (management units, local forests);
  • integrated forest management plans¹;
  • areas of increased timber production.

¹ For the integrated forest management plans, specific consultation methods are set out in the Manuel de consultation du public sur les plans d’aménagement forestier intégré et les plans d’aménagement spéciaux and the Manuel de consultation des communautés autochtones sur les plans d’aménagement forestier intégré (available in French only).
**The main steps in the consultation process (p. 6)**

The consultation process is adjusted to reflect the provincial or regional nature of the topic for consultation.

For a provincial consultation, the process must identify the important elements to be considered when a public participation approach is designed (e.g. scope, timeframe, information, promotion, feedback, evaluation). It must also be consistent with the principles and process used for Aboriginal community consultations.

The process used for consultations on topics that are regional in scope is adjusted according to the characteristics of the topic, the features of the region concerned and any specific elements applicable to the participating individuals, organizations and communities. It must, however, be consistent with the principles set out in the Policy, and with the process used for Aboriginal community consultations where applicable.

**Aboriginal communities (p. 9)**

The MFFP is bound by a certain number of commitments to Aboriginal groups and has a constitutional obligation to consult and, where necessary, accommodate them. Specific aspects must therefore be considered when applying the Policy to these consultations.

**Financial support (p. 11)**

The MFFP pays the cost of producing, translating where applicable, publishing and distributing the information required for the consultations. However, the individuals and organizations taking part in consultations must pay their own participation costs. For the Aboriginal communities, financial support may be paid to facilitate participation.

**Monitoring and reporting (p. 11)**

The Minister reports on the Policy’s general implementation in the five-yearly review of sustainable forest development prescribed by the Sustainable Forest Development Act. Additional reports are included in the MFFP’s Annual Management Report, in particular with regard to the aims of ensuring participation by citizens and maintaining harmonious relations with Aboriginal nations and communities. In addition, a public report is produced for each consultation, and is published on the MFFP’s website.

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