

The Air Quality Management System

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Roles and Responsibilities

Context

The intent of this document is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of jurisdictions for the implementation and continued operation of the Air Quality Management System (System). The document does not bind, in a legal sense, jurisdictions to undertake specific activities, but supports the spirit and intent of the System.

The System is a collaborative approach for reducing air pollution in Canada. The System is comprehensive, examining all significant sources of air pollution, thereby contributing to improved human health and environmental benefits. The System builds upon existing government actions, is designed to allow the “best placed” government to act, and provides a framework that balances consistency across Canada with flexibility for provinces and territories to achieve optimal air quality outcomes.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments agree to continue working collaboratively to implement the System and recognize:

- the importance to all Canadians of the health and environmental benefits from improvements in air quality
- that air quality is affected by many factors
- that the authority to act to improve air quality is shared by federal, provincial and territorial governments; and
- that municipalities, Aboriginal people, stakeholders and non-government organizations also have an important contribution to make to improving air quality.

Principles Informing the Air Quality Management System

- **Collaborative** – the System relies on collaboration among governments and an appropriate degree of stakeholder input in the development and refinement over time of system elements
- **Comprehensive** – the System will eventually address all significant sources of outdoor air pollutants
- **Efficient** – the System is coherent and enables the best-placed government to act on air quality improvement
- **Flexibility** – The System integrates flexible mechanisms to achieve optimal air quality outcomes.

- **Supportive of continuous improvement** – the System includes the concept of continuous improvement which strives to implement actions to continually improve air quality
- **Supportive of keeping clean areas clean** – the System seeks to ensure that air quality does not deteriorate
- **Science-informed** – the System supports air quality management actions with accurate scientific information
- **Transparent** – the System openly shares information in a timely fashion about air quality, emissions, air zone management plans and their results
- **Outcomes-focused** – the System supports planning and actions that lead to achieving demonstrable results and the goals of the System

System Implementation and Improvement

The federal, provincial and territorial governments will collaborate within the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to implement collective aspects of the Air Quality Management System and to improve the System; and to review and refine existing system elements and to develop new elements as needed, with appropriate input of industry and non-government organization stakeholders.

System Elements

Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards

The Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) are health- and environment-based numerical values of outdoor air concentrations of pollutants. Their purpose is to drive continuous improvement in air quality. Actions taken to improve air quality will be guided by the Air Zone Management Framework – described below – which includes air management levels.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- All governments have a collective responsibility to prevent air quality from deteriorating, to work to ensure that air pollutant concentrations do not exceed the CAAQS within their borders, and to strive for continuous improvements in air quality.
- Governments will collaborate within the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to establish, review and amend the CAAQS, with the appropriate involvement of stakeholders.
- The federal government will incorporate the CAAQS as objectives in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*.

Air Zones

Air zones are management areas delineated within a province or territory. The Air Zone Management Framework, which includes management levels, provides guidance on how jurisdictions may prioritize actions to achieve the CAAQS. Air zone management is a mechanism that will help jurisdictions to achieve continuous improvement in air quality, to prevent air quality deterioration, and to ensure the CAAQS are not exceeded.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Provinces and territories will establish local air zones within their boundaries and will lead air quality management guided by the Air Zone Management Framework.
- The federal government will provide technical support of air quality monitoring for the air zones on federal and Aboriginal lands and for facilities on federal and Aboriginal lands. The federal government will work with the governments of Nunavut and Northwest Territories to help to manage air quality in those territories.

Transboundary Air Pollution: Regional Airsheds

Regional airsheds are broad geographic areas that encompass a number of air zones and may cross provincial/territorial and international boundaries. They provide a framework for inter-jurisdictional collaboration to address transboundary air quality issues. Information obtained from airsheds may assist the federal government in discussions with the United States under international agreements such as the Canada-U.S. Air Quality Agreement, on air pollution moving across the Canada-U.S. border. Airsheds also provide a basis for collecting air quality information across Canada and national reporting.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The federal government will collaborate with provinces and territories to better understand the flow of air pollution among airsheds and may coordinate the actions required to address international and inter-jurisdictional transboundary air pollution.
- The federal government will lead the actions and negotiations to address the transboundary flow of air pollutants originating from other countries with the involvement of affected provinces and territories.

Base-Level Industrial Emission Requirements

These industrial emission requirements are to achieve a consistent base-level of performance for major emitters across the country.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Governments will work collaboratively within the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment through mutually agreed processes to develop, review and amend the base-level industrial emissions requirements (BLIERS) as necessary, with the appropriate involvement of stakeholders.

- Under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, the federal government will regulate where feasible, or use alternative instruments, to establish the BLIERs across Canada, which will function as a backstop to provincial and territorial instruments implementing the BLIERs.
- The provinces and territories may regulate or otherwise implement the BLIERs. Where provinces or territories opt not to implement a BLIER, the federal regulation or instrument could apply and the federal government would ensure compliance with the BLIER(s).

Mobile Sources

The System recognizes that the impact of mobile sources on air quality in many parts of Canada requires a comprehensive approach.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The federal government has the lead responsibility for regulating and implementing emission and fuel standards for new on- and off-road vehicles and engines, as well as emissions from marine, aviation and rail.
- Provinces and territories may enact further measures to reduce emissions from mobile sources, particularly with regulating the in-use fleet.
- The federal, provincial and territorial governments may work together to identify mobile source priorities, share information on best practices and effective action and collaborate to better address mobile source pollution.

Science, Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting

The successful implementation of the system relies on representative, timely and easily accessible monitoring and reporting of ambient air quality, emission sources, and the actions undertaken by jurisdictions to improve air quality. Scientific data and air quality modelling are also required to support the system principles of being science-informed and transparent. Under the System, Canadians will have ready access to information about air quality through public reporting, modelling and monitoring mechanisms.

For the System as a whole:

Roles and Responsibilities: Environmental and Health Science

- Federal, provincial and territorial governments will identify and assess environmental and health-related knowledge gaps and use science-based information to assess the impact of identified air pollutants of concern and inform Canadians and decision-makers.
- Health Canada will investigate the impact of air pollution on human health and estimate the health benefits of emissions reductions. Provincial and territorial ministries may collaborate in this work.
- Federal, provincial and territorial governments will conduct targeted research on air pollutants, their fate and impacts.

Roles and Responsibilities: Monitoring and Reporting and Modelling

- Governments will work collaboratively to ensure the most efficient and least burdensome reporting while enabling all governments to have the compliance information they need about industrial emissions.
- The federal, provincial and territorial governments will continue to coordinate the production of emissions inventories for air pollutants of concern.
- The federal government will lead the preparation of national emissions inventory information and provide expertise in atmospheric modelling.
- With support from the provinces and territories, the federal government will lead the preparation of a Canadian State of the Air Report, which will be compiled on a regular basis. The report will build upon provincial air zone reports and will inform on the air quality and trends within the six regional airsheds.

For Air Zone Management:

Roles and Responsibilities: Monitoring and Reporting and Modelling

- The federal, provincial and territorial governments will continue to collaborate and operate the National Air Pollution Surveillance (NAPS) network that ensures that air quality monitoring is available as outlined under existing federal, provincial and territorial agreements.
- Provincial and territorial governments will report regularly to their publics on air quality, on the achievement of the ambient air quality standards, and on the actions undertaken in air zones within their boundaries.
- To the extent possible, the federal government will provide input to the provincial and territorial reports for the air zones that include federal and Aboriginal land.