

CLEAN AIR STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

2024 – 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by the Board on September 12, 2024.



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Acronyms

AAQO	(Alberta) Ambient Air Quality Objective
AQMF	Air Quality Management Framework
AQMS	Air Quality Management System
CAAQS	Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards
EPA	(Alberta) Environment and Protected Areas
GoA	Government of Alberta
NGO	Non-government organization
SPSC	Strategic Planning Subcommittee

About CASA

The Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA) is a registered not-for-profit Society under the Alberta *Societies Act*. It is composed of representatives from interested and affected industries, governments, non-government organizations, and Samson Cree Nation. All members have one or more of the following interests: an economic stake in air quality management, responsibility for human health and/or air quality, and representing environmental interests likely to be directly affected by air quality. CASA contributes to strategic air quality management for Alberta by identifying priority issues and developing action plans, evidence-based recommendations, information, and tools that weigh environmental, health, and economic consequences and expected outcomes. CASA's 30-year commitment to using a consensus decision making process to achieve consensus whenever possible has created a unique and trusted forum for air issue discussions and resolutions. We recognize the value in striving for consensus, even if it isn't always reached.

Setting the Stage for Strategic Planning in 2023

Since its inception in 1994, CASA has prided itself on providing a forum where a broad range of organizations, companies, individuals, experts, and various levels of government, come together to discuss and develop advice and tools to address some of Alberta's most challenging air quality management issues. Seats were later added to the board of directors for First Nation and Métis representation. CASA works because it is an association that brings together these groups who accept a shared responsibility for air quality management and are committed to understanding each other's interests and seeking consensus solutions to address those interests.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge to CASA as this organization relies on building personal relationships between the diverse groups of people with varying interests who are involved in our work. These relationships are often developed through in-person meetings and events which the pandemic interrupted for over two years. The pandemic also interrupted the finalization of our draft 2019 strategic plan as our board of directors, members, and participants adapted to shifting priorities, new challenges, and reduced capacity.

CASA continued to make progress on its priorities despite the emerging challenges of the pandemic and in late 2022, the time was right to start the work of strategic planning again. This was the opportunity to focus on revitalizing this alliance, identifying shared strategic priorities, and ensuring we have the right representatives at the table to take on existing and emerging air quality management challenges we collectively need to address. Buoyed by a funding commitment from Environment and Protected Areas (EPA) that will provide core operating funds until 2027, we are primed for success.

The Strategic Planning Process

In September 2022, the board struck a Strategic Planning Subcommittee (SPSC) that was tasked with developing an approach to the strategic planning process, including a workshop that would inform the development of a new strategic plan to guide the work of CASA over the next four years. The committee's approach, which was approved by the board, included holding a two-day in-person workshop in January 2023, with the participants being CASA board members as well as staff from the GoA (Environment and Protected Areas and Health) that work closely with CASA. As supporting information to inform the workshop approach the SPSC chose the most recently approved strategic plan (from 2012), the Clean Air Strategy and its Action Plan, and a summary of the successes and challenges of CASA's recently completed projects. The workshop was facilitated by professional facilitators from EPA.

A two-day workshop limited the discussion to the most salient points of a strategic plan, including an examination of where we are now as an organization, what is our value proposition, what is our ideal state going forward, and what elements do we need to focus on to achieve that ideal state. The elements that were carried over from the 2012 plan with minor changes included the Vision, Mission, and Operating Principles. Commonly agreed to challenges, drivers, and opportunities are listed below, and form the basis for the goals and objectives.

This plan was drafted based on the outcomes of the workshop discussions, with support of the SPSC. The board provided input which was considered and incorporated prior to seeking approval by consensus. Consistent with this unique function and purpose, CASA's strategic plan reflects the interests of its members; it is a synthesis of shared perspectives regarding the best ways and means for this alliance to address air quality management in Alberta.

Accountability

This strategic plan was prepared under the direction of the CASA board of directors and was approved by consensus on September 12, 2024.

Purpose of the Strategic Plan

The CASA Strategic Plan sets out the vision and direction for the organization until the end of 2027. It describes the purpose the organization will fulfill and provides a blueprint for getting there. The plan provides a structure that the board can use to amend operating policy and make day-to-day decisions, consistent with CASA's purpose and culture. Finally, the plan outlines the organization's goals and objectives.

Vision and Mission

Vision

The air will have no adverse odour, taste or visual impact and have no measurable short- or long-term adverse effects on people, animals or the environment.

Mission

The Clean Air Strategic Alliance brings together a diverse group of representatives from First Nations, government, industry, Métis, non-government organizations, interested and affected stakeholders, and subject-matter experts, that are well-positioned to assess and provide strategies to improve air quality for Albertans, using a collaborative consensus process.

Operating Principles

CASA's operating principles guide how the board, staff, and participants conduct the organization's business, including administration, projects, programs, and all related activities of the Alliance.

Collaboration: We believe in the power of working together.

Integrity: We behave ethically and are open, honest and fair.

Independent and influential advisory body: We serve as an independent and influential advisory body that empowers organizations to make informed decisions.

Transparency: We are committed to open and honest communication at all levels, both within our organization, with our members, Indigenous communities and Peoples, stakeholders, and interested parties.

Fairness: We believe in treating every individual with equity and respect, regardless of their background, beliefs, or abilities.

Innovation: We believe in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and creativity.

Timeliness: We prioritize and coordinate our efforts to enable effective and efficient responses to air quality management issues.

Integration: We are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of integrated air-quality management. Our values are rooted in our commitment to a) environmental protection to prevent short- and long-term adverse health effects, b) economic performance and efficiency, and c) continuous improvement and pollution prevention.

CASA's Operating Environment

CASA's operating environment had a significant influence on the development of this strategic plan and has shaped each of the plan's goals. Like all organizations, CASA needs to adapt to changing circumstances; some defined by the nature of the issues we discuss, others defined by the needs of the other organizations and governments with which we collaborate, and by the expectations of CASA members. Key drivers, challenges, and opportunities identified at the workshop led to the goals and objectives detailed below.

Drivers

- CASA should be able to respond to its members' priorities to provide strategic air quality management advice within the scope of the AQMS in a timely fashion.
- CASA should be able to bring together the broad diversity of interested and affected First Nations, Metis, governments and their departments, industries, non-governmental organizations, and experts needed to provide strategic, evidence-based advice.
- For nearly thirty years, CASA has contributed to, and has the potential to continue contributing to, air quality management frameworks including, but not limited to, Alberta's Ambient Air Quality Objectives and Guidelines, Air Quality Management Frameworks, and Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- Non-point sources of pollutants contribute to lower air quality and need to be proactively addressed (e.g., transportation, residential heating, construction operations and roads [dust], open-air burning, and fugitive emissions from industrial sources [fuel terminals], agricultural operations).
- The impact of climate change on air quality, and the context and implication of these changes on activities related to both.
- Potential impacts of new technologies on managing air quality that could be applied to industrial and domestic sources that can reduce both GHG and air pollutant emissions.
- CASA processes require streamlining to be more responsive to emerging needs and enhance its ability to provide advice when asked.

Challenges

- The Alberta AQMS is complex, and there is a lack of understanding of all the mechanisms involved, and CASA's place within this system.
- CASA has existed for nearly 30 years and its mandate and purpose is not as clear as when it began.
- CASA's projects have not always worked towards a larger strategy. The connection between the work of CASA and the larger air quality management strategy needs to be clarified.
- First Nations rights and perspectives are important to inform CASA's work. The structure of our Board of Directors presents a governance challenge that needs to be addressed if we are to increase participation from First Nations at the board level, and to drive interest

at the project level.

- Métis rights and perspectives are important to inform CASA's work. There has been limited success in bringing them to the board table, though there has been some participation at the project level.
- There are overlaps between climate policy and air quality management policy for many of our members.
- The consensus process is valuable regardless of the outcome, but it can be a challenge for projects which require shorter timelines or when it's important to fully understand the diversity of perspectives from all participants, including those who may not be at CASA's tables.
- There are influences outside of CASA's control that can affect whether strategic evidence-based advice, whether it has consensus support or not, will lead to workable changes in air quality management policy.

Opportunities

- CASA is the primary group to bring together various perspectives and provide advice on provincial-scale air quality management issues.
- CASA is an alliance that embraces a collaborative approach that brings together a diversity of perspectives for managing air quality in Alberta.
- CASA should reinvigorate itself by building new relationships and reinforce existing relationships to ensure the appropriate organizations, First Nations, Métis, academics, and other interested and affected parties are at the table and contribute to meeting the coming challenges.
- CASA should work with groups not directly represented on the board of directors but have a role in air quality management to support our work (e.g., Academia, Agriculture and Irrigation, Airsheds, Health, Indigenous Relations, Transportation and Economic Corridors, Alberta Motor Transportation Association, Urban Municipalities, and others).
- Build on current relationships with First Nations and Métis to increase their awareness of CASA's work and participation on the board and project teams. This could lead to potentially braiding Indigenous Knowledge with Western knowledge within CASA's work.
- Receive clear direction from the GoA when seeking CASA's strategic advice on specific and appropriate air quality management issues that lead to implementable, workable, policy changes.
- CASA could lead a review and renewal of the Clean Air Strategy and the Action Plan. The last ten-year Action Plan's horizon was 2012–2022.
- CASA is well-positioned to fill the gap regarding non-point sources.
- The consensus-based model is central, and where possible, should continue to be a CASA goal; however, there is also value in understanding and documenting the perspectives across sectors.
- In examining air quality challenges, CASA can consider linkages between criteria air

contaminants and GHG emissions reductions and the relationship of the two.

- CASA is well-positioned to build capacity in the air quality management sector by working with other partners to develop and promote air literacy along with providing opportunities for training in collaborative and consensus-based approaches.
- CASA should ensure a strategic, proactive approach to project selection, and is well-suited to both large, strategic projects and smaller projects to fill specific policy and/or information gaps. The process should be flexible to adapt to meet the needs of the project proponent.
- CASA should work with EPA to develop a mandate that could be tied to multi-year core operations funding.
- Streamline processes to enhance CASA's ability to provide advice quickly and be more responsive to emerging needs.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Contribute to the continued strategic development and implementation of effective and efficient air quality management in Alberta.

CASA identifies and pursues opportunities where it can facilitate effective engagement, multi-perspective dialogue, and offer expertise and evidence-based recommendations on the attributes, scope, direction, on effective air quality management and develop strategic solutions for addressing these issues in Alberta.

Objective 1.1: Facilitate the discussion and evaluation of air policy initiatives on air quality and the determinants of air quality, as requested by the Government of Alberta.

Objective 1.2: Conduct periodic environmental scans to identify emerging issues, trends, patterns, and structures which are important to air quality management in Alberta. Environmental scans should include environmental, social, governance, health, technological, economic, and political developments.

Objective 1.3: Strategically undertake projects based on emerging issues and air quality management priorities, with a particular focus on i) possible non-point air emission source issues and management gaps, and ii) understanding how different air emission sources are impacting provincial air quality, health, and environmental benefits that might be realized from different possible management strategies.

Goal 2: Foster a mutually beneficial, collaborative approach to support strategic air quality management in Alberta through cooperation between First Nations, government, industry, Métis, non-government organizations, interested and affected stakeholders, and subject-matter experts.

CASA proactively establishes and maintains vibrant relationships with First Nations, government, industry, Métis, non-government organizations, interested and affected stakeholders, and subject-matter experts to facilitate a shared understanding of the air quality management system and how CASA and its partners contribute, or can contribute to, that system in Alberta.

Objective 2.1: Ensure CASA's governance structure, processes, and membership, support an exemplary collaborative approach to air quality management in Alberta, where all parties affected or interested in CASA initiatives can voluntarily participate and have their values, interests, and knowledge respected.

Objective 2.2: Establish and maintain relationships with First Nations, government, industry, Métis, non-government organizations, interested and affected stakeholders, and subject-matter experts that contribute to, or are affected by, Alberta's air quality management system.

Objective 2.3: Provide a respectful forum for strategic discussions on air quality management issues among First Nations, government, industry, Métis, non-government organizations, interested and affected stakeholders, and subject-matter experts that contribute to, or are affected by, Alberta’s air quality management system.

Objective 2.4: Demonstrate effective, collaborative decision-making processes in the delivery of strategic advice on air quality management.

Goal 3: Build capacity for the collaborative approach to managing air quality in Alberta.

CASA is well-positioned to bring together resources and partners to improve air literacy for its members and others and build awareness and understanding of the benefits of collaborative and consensus-based approaches to problem solving among groups with diverse perspectives.

Objective 3.1: Contribute to improved provincial air literacy by assembling and sharing information on air quality management issues, Alberta’s AQMS, mitigation measures, and best management practices that could be effective in Alberta.

Objective 3.2: Increase awareness of air quality management information and specific CASA activities and projects through targeted outreach to interested groups.

Objective 3.3: Build capacity in the air quality management community by providing training opportunities on interest-based negotiation and consensus-based decision making.

Performance measures

Performance measures will be developed following a board workshop to be held in April 2025.