New Management System to Improve Air Quality Across Canada



B
ecause air knows no borders, managing air pollution and air quality are best tackled on a national level, with coordination by federal, provincial and territorial government. So on Oct. 11, 2012, the federal, provincial and territorial environmental ministers, through the CCME, agreed to protect the environment and the health of Canadians with measures to improve air quality through a comprehensive new Air Quality Management System. The system is designed to use a flexible approach to implementation that will help jurisdictions improve air quality while maintaining competitiveness in all regions of Canada. Here's a look at the new Air Quality Management System (AQMS).

THE SYSTEM

5 Key Components: The AQMS includes five key components:

- Standards that set the bar for outdoor air quality management across the country. Governments have agreed on new standards under the AQMS for fine particulate matter and ozone, the two main components of smog.

They've also started work on new standards for sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, which are significant components of air pollution;

- Industrial emission requirements that set a base level of performance for major industries in Canada. Industrial emission requirements have been agreed to for some sectors, including cement and base metal smelting. Outstanding industrial emission requirements for sectors such as petroleum refining, coal-fired electricity generation and reciprocating engines will be addressed through a continuing collaborative process. The AQMS will also include monitoring and reporting of outdoor air quality conditions and emissions from major industrial sources;
- A framework for air zone management within individual jurisdictions that enables action tailored to specific sources of air emissions in a given area;
- Regional airsheds that facilitate coordinated action when air pollution crosses a border; and
- An intergovernmental working group to improve collaboration and develop a plan to reduce emissions from the transportation sector.

Implementation: The AQMS reflects a flexible approach to implementation that recognizes current air quality measures already being undertaken by jurisdictions, particularly for existing facilities. That is, the system doesn't replace existing air quality laws and regulations but is designed to enhance them. With the exception of Qu□bec, jurisdictions have agreed to begin implementing the AQMS, subject to further jurisdictional approvals. Although Qu□bec supports the AQMS's general objectives, it won't implement the system because it includes federal industrial emission requirements that duplicate Qu□bec's *Clean Air Regulation*. But the province will collaborate with the other jurisdictions on developing other elements of the system, notably air zones and airsheds. (For more details on the AQMS, see these FAQs answered by the

CCME.)

ANALYSIS

Why is the implementation of the AQMS a good thing’ According to the CCME, the system:

- Is comprehensive in that it looks at *all* major sources of air pollution that contribute to air quality problems and supports actions that will address these sources;
- Is collaborative because it provides a framework for federal, provincial and territorial governments to work together to find the best way to improve air quality;
- Is inclusive’stakeholders and communities have an important role in finding the best ways to improve air quality;
- Is proactive because it focuses on effective actions that’ll reduce pollution levels overall and keep clean areas clean;
- Is flexible, recognizing the important differences among Canadian jurisdictions and allowing for tailored responses to air quality problems;
- Is accountable in that it provides Canadians with information about the state of the air they’re breathing and actions underway to protect and improve outdoor air quality; and
- Helps Canada internationally by allowing the country to continue to demonstrate active management of air quality, strengthening its negotiating position with the US to expand the Canada/US Air Quality Agreement.