
Background

Over the last few years, the Cumulative Environmental Management Association (CEMA) has been the subject of scrutiny and criticism from various sources with respect to governance, operations, accountability and member participation. Specific areas identified for improvement include: enhancing efficiency and timeliness in developing recommendations; resolving general governance issues; determining the types of decisions that do not need to be the subject of consensus; evaluating the adequacy of the regulatory backstop and the resources available to fulfill its mandate.

From mid-2008 to mid-2009, the organization developed and implemented a Revitalization Strategy to address the strategic and operational challenges identified in the report by Doug Radke, *Investing in our Future: Responding to the Rapid Growth of Oil Sands Development — Final Report*, the Oil Sands Multi-stakeholder Consultation Committee, three Energy Resource Conservation Board hearings (formally Energy and Utilities Board) and by CEMA Members. The Revitalization Strategy included 100 action items CEMA identified to resolve the challenges. To date, the implementation of over 95% of these items has been completed.

The Government of Alberta and the CEMA Management Committee carried out a number of initiatives to address the challenges facing the organization. The Government of Alberta supported two independent third party reviews by Price Waterhouse Coopers (2008) and Integrated Environments and Tumbleweed Consulting (2009). These reviews explored the operations and structure of CEMA and identified recommendations for improving the Association.

In March of 2009 the CEMA Management Committee and Northeast Alberta Regulators Group met to identify a joint review process to address the remaining challenges facing CEMA. The Joint Governance Review Team was created to explore options for change and to ensure consistency and compatibility between the CEMA led organizational review process and the separate regulator led change process. The Review Team included four representatives from the CEMA Management Committee, four representatives from the Northeast Alberta Regulators Group, and CEMA's Executive Director. The Review Team considered the strengths and challenges of the governance structure and operations and the future relationship of the Association with government, regional planning and cumulative effects management.

The Joint Review Team has met several times in facilitated meetings to review background material, debate draft recommendations, and ultimately prepare a final report. Over this period, the Review Team also used a process of presenting draft options for feed-back and then using the feed-back to develop the final recommendations. Feed back on the report was provided by CEMA members at three separate meetings, and CEMA staff and the Aboriginal Round Table.

The Review Team met with former CEMA members from the Athabasca Tribal Council Industry Relations Corporations, the Oil Sands Environmental Coalition, and current members of CEMA at the Oil Sands Developers Group and the Northeast Alberta Regulators Group. In addition to these meetings, the Review Team held a facilitated workshop on November 5, 2009 to test several potential options with current and former members of CEMA. The feed-back received throughout this process provided a rich collection of ideas and healthy debate that the Review Team used to draft this report. The Review Team recognizes that not all the ideas received during this process made it into the final draft. The Review Team acknowledges that the recommendations, if accepted by CEMA, may also require a significant amount of work from CEMA members to refine, clarify and ultimately implement.

The Joint CEMA Governance Review Team identified a number of strategic challenges, options and recommendations in the following areas:

1. Geographic Area, Vision, Mission and Goals for CEMA
2. Organizational Structure
3. CEMA-Government Relationship
4. Member Issue Identification
5. Issue Prioritization
6. Aboriginal Engagement
7. Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Engagement
8. Regional Committee Interface/ Relationships with Other Regional Organizations
9. Long Term Funding
10. Performance Tracking and Indicators

The member organizations have initiated a process of change that will be challenging for organization. Addressing each of these areas effectively will have a major impact on the structure and operation of CEMA but are intended to prepare it for future challenges.

CEMA is a multi-stakeholder organization governed by more than 40 members representing all levels of government, industry, regulatory bodies, environmental groups, and Aboriginal Groups. CEMA was established in 2000 to address a number of issues identified in the 1999 Regional Sustainable Development Strategy for the Athabasca Oil Sands Area. Since its inception, CEMA has produced a number of reports and management frameworks that have been submitted to the Government of Alberta for review.