

LOWER ATHABASCA REGIONAL PLAN

5-Year Evaluation Report

Prepared For: Alberta Land Use Secretariat

Date: May 2019

Prepared By: Elevate Consulting



Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary	3
II.	Introduction to Land-use Planning in Alberta	6
III.	Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Background.....	8
IV.	Evaluation Purpose and Methodology	11
V.	Evaluation	14
	Purpose Statement 1: <i>ALSA</i> Section 1(2)(a).....	14
	Purpose Statement 2: <i>ALSA</i> Section 1(2)(b).....	16
	Purpose Statement 3: <i>ALSA</i> Section 1(2)(c)	21
	Purpose Statement 4: <i>ALSA</i> Section 1(2)(d).....	23
VI.	Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 5-Year Evaluation Conclusion.....	25
VII.	Report Submission.....	27
VIII.	References	28
IX.	Appendices	30
	Appendix 1: LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies.....	31
	Appendix 2: 5-Year Evaluation Committee Terms of Reference	35

Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

DRAFT 5-Year Evaluation Report

I. Executive Summary

In 2008 the Government of Alberta recognized the need to respond to competing interests on the land base by managing continued growth responsibly for future generations and ensuring that there was a balance between economic, environmental and social demands. As a result, the Government, after an extensive stakeholder engagement process, developed the Land-use Framework (LUF), which sets out the broad principles and intended outcomes for regional planning. The *Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA)* was created to provide the mechanisms and legal standing to underpin regional planning. The Land Use Secretariat (LUS) was established as the organization within Government to guide the regional planning process and to provide an oversight role with respect to execution of the plans.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP), approved in 2012, was the first regional plan completed under this initiative. LARP represented Alberta's first attempt to conclude a fully integrated planning process across multiple stakeholder groups, as well as the first attempt at defining, measuring and regulating the effects from a cumulative effects perspective.

Pursuant to section 58(d) of *ALSA*, LUS's mandate includes the following, for each regional plan:

At least once every 5 years, to appoint a committee under section 63(3)(b) to evaluate the objectives and audit the policies of regional plans for the purpose of determining whether either or both are meeting the purposes of this Act, and to make a public report to the Stewardship Minister on the evaluation and audit.

Elevate Consulting was appointed as the Evaluation Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "Committee") to undertake this evaluation. The Committee developed a series of questions to evaluate whether the objectives and strategies of LARP meet each of the four *ALSA* purpose statements. Under Section 1(2) of the *ALSA*, the purposes are:

- (a) To provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environmental and social objectives;
- (b) To provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples;
- (c) To provide for the coordination of decisions by decision makers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment;

- (d) To create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking account of and responding to the cumulative effect of human endeavour and other events.

The following rating criteria were used to determine whether the objectives and strategies met the ALSA purpose statements:

Rating	Definition	Criteria
	Fully addresses the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 concerns raised
	Mostly addresses the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≤ 2 concerns raised
	Does not address the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 2 concerns raised

The summary of the evaluation findings is outlined in the following table:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(a): to provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environmental and social objectives	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide guidance across economic, environmental and social aspects of the Lower Athabasca Region?</i>	
2. <i>Have the objective and policies been communicated across government, publicly, and to industry and stakeholders?</i>	
3. <i>Have the objective and policies been legislated or regulated?</i>	
4. <i>Is there a structure and/or processes in place for ongoing monitoring and reporting on progress on the objectives and policies?</i>	
ALSA Section 1(2)(b): to provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide or contribute to a vision for the future state?</i>	
2. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide guidance to inform decisions makers, industry and stakeholders on moving towards a future state?</i>	
3. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers (i.e. provincial government, municipal government, industry), either at a regional or sub-regional basis?</i>	
ALSA Section 1(2)(c): to provide for the coordination of decisions by decisionmakers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies pertain to all the following areas: land, species, human settlement, natural resources, and environment?</i>	
2. <i>Were the objectives and policies developed in a manner that enables coordinated decision-making across government?</i>	
3. <i>Is the implementation of the objectives and policies mandatory across government?</i>	
4. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide a framework by which ongoing coordinated decision-making is enabled?</i>	

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
5. <i>Is the implementation of the objectives and policies monitored and tracked across government?</i>	
ALSA Section 1(2)(d): to create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking into account of and responding to the cumulative effects of human endeavour and other events	
1. <i>Does the Plan identify management strategies to respond to and manage cumulative effects?</i>	
2. <i>Does the Plan identify or plan to identify thresholds for acceptable land-use impacts in relation to the objectives and strategies?</i>	

II. Introduction to Land-use Planning in Alberta

Albertans have a special relationship with the land. With broad and varied landscapes - from prairies and parklands, to forests and foothills, the Northern Boreal and the Rockies—each part of the landscape is unique and impactful. While the Province has enjoyed significant prosperity, increased growth, both in terms of the economy and size of the population, has brought new challenges and responsibilities. Simply put, with more people doing more activities on the same pieces of land, the need for coordinated, integrated land-use planning was necessary to building and maintaining a prosperous Alberta, while ensured responsible stewardship of the environment.

The Government of Alberta recognized that competing interests on the land created the need to manage continued growth responsibly for future generations, ensuring that there was a balance between economic, environmental, and social demands. In 2008, the Government developed the Land-use Framework (LUF) as a framework for land-use management and decision-making, identifying the need to create land-use plans across the Province.

The land-use planning process developed for LARP is illustrated below in Figure 1.

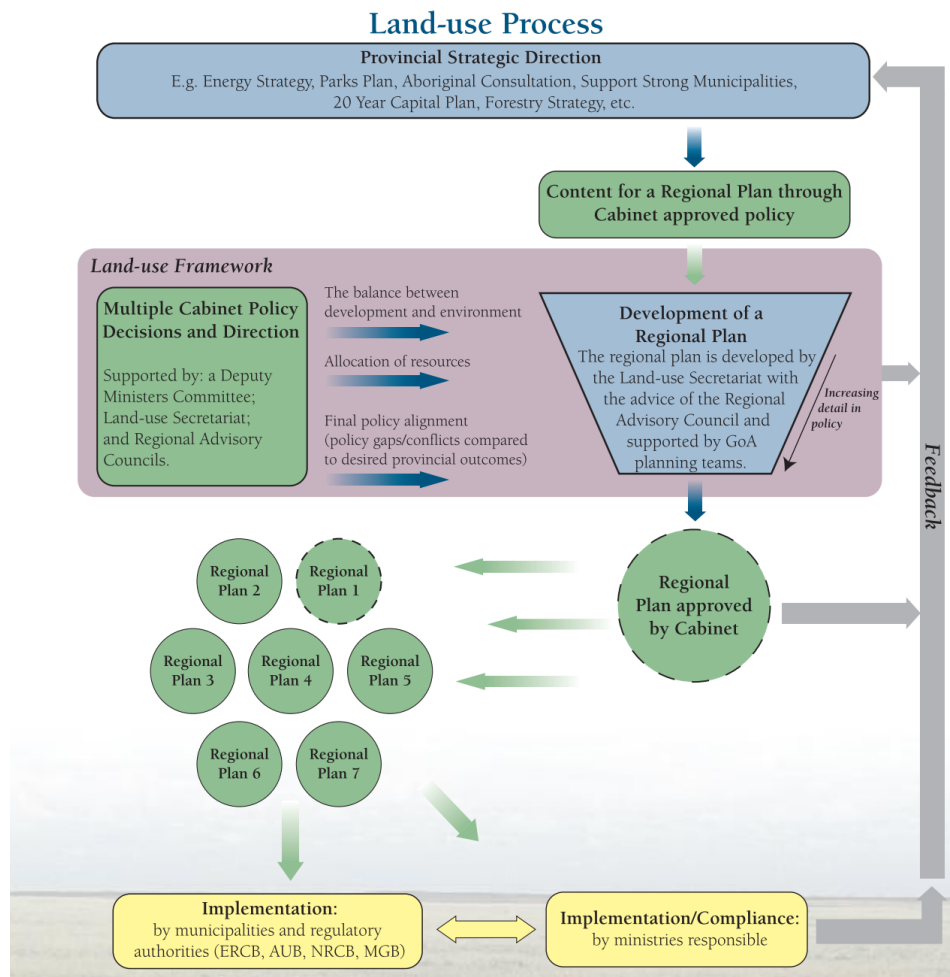


Figure 1: LARP Land-use Process

LUF proposed a vision to guide the land-use planning process and outline the desired future state for the Province, as follows:

Albertans work together to respect and care for the land as the foundation of our economic, environmental and social well-being.

As a means to measure progress, LUF also proposed the following three desired outcomes:

1. Healthy economy supported by our land and natural resources;
2. Healthy ecosystems and environment; and
3. People-friendly communities with ample recreational and cultural opportunities.

In alignment with the vision and the outcomes, the LUF establishes seven strategies to improve upon existing land-use decision making and give a blueprint to follow as LUF was initiated. These seven strategies were:

Strategy 1: Develop seven regional land-use plans based on seven new land-use regions.

Strategy 2: Create a Land-use Secretariat and establish a Regional Advisory Council for each region.

Strategy 3: Cumulative effects management will be used at the regional level to manage the impacts of development on land, water and air.

Strategy 4: Develop a strategy for conservation and stewardship on private and public lands

Strategy 5: Promote efficient use of land to reduce the footprint of human activities on Alberta's landscape.

Strategy 6: Establish an information, monitoring and knowledge system to contribute to continuous improvement of land-use planning and decision-making.

Strategy 7: Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning.

ALSA was proclaimed in 2009, supporting LUF and establishing the legal basis for the development of regional plans.

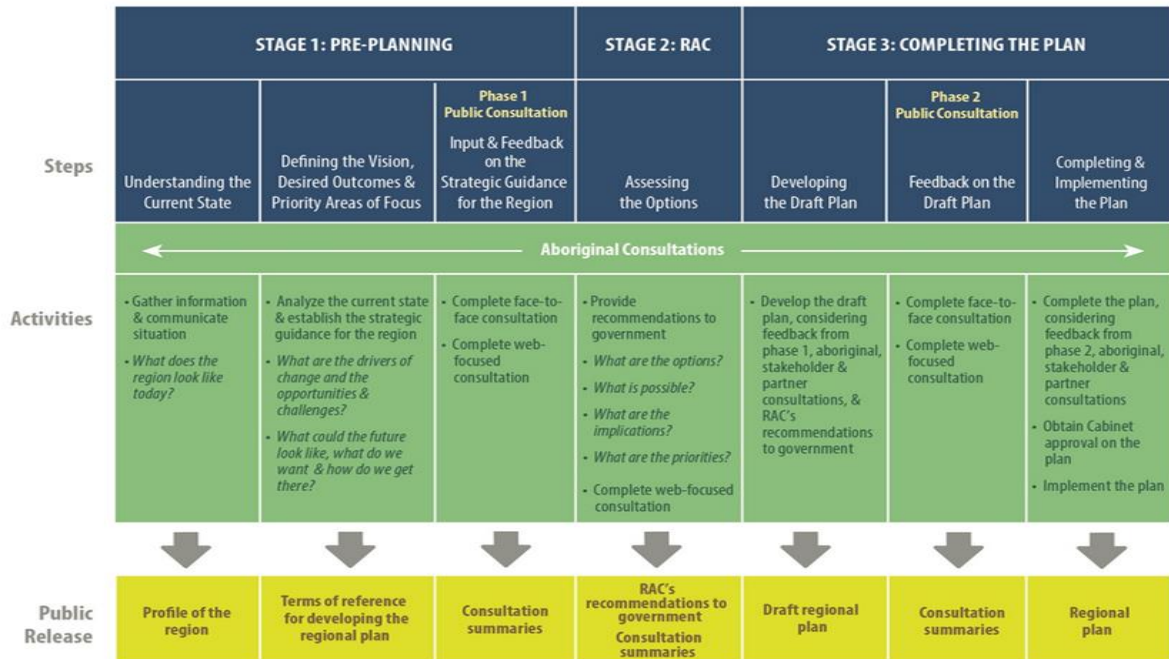
III. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Background

LARP was the first regional land-use plan initiated under the Land-use Framework and *ALSA*. LARP represented Alberta's first attempt to conclude a fully integrated planning process across multiple stakeholder groups, as well as the first attempt at defining, measuring and regulating the effects from a cumulative effects perspective.

Consistent with LUF and *ALSA*, a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) was established and consultations with First Nation and Métis communities, stakeholders, municipalities and the public were undertaken. LARP was approved by Cabinet and established as a regulation in August 2012, coming into effect on September 15, 2012.

Under section 52 of *ALSA*, the LARP planning process involved the creation of a RAC, which comprised of members with a cross-section of social, economic and environmental expertise and experience in order to bring local insight and perspectives on present and future land-use activities and challenges in a region. The RAC mandate for LARP was to provide advice to Cabinet regarding the regional plan. The LARP RAC included representation across local government, industry, Indigenous peoples, federal government, environmental organizations and other advisors with specific and relevant expertise such as cumulative effects management. This cross section of individuals supported the development of the plan and provided advice and recommendations to Government on the specifics of LARP. The RAC was informed by the Terms of Reference for developing LARP, which sets out the process by which the regional plan will be developed and provides guidance from Cabinet on specific economic, environmental and social factors that must be considered in the region. The RAC was also informed by the Profile of the Lower Athabasca Region, which provides an overview of key social, economic and environmental factors in the region that need to be considered in developing a regional plan, as well as outlining the major land uses underway, highlighting important trends and identifying additional or changing human activities that can be expected in the region.

LARP was developed collaboratively with government staff from the relevant and impacted Ministries, ensuring that it reflected the priorities and capacities within Government. In addition, all Albertans were able to participate in the development of LARP through an interactive website and face-to-face consultations where they were asked for their input on issues in the Lower Athabasca Region, their feedback on advice from the RAC and their feedback on the draft Plan. Feedback was solicited through information presented on the LUS website. The consultation process utilized for LARP is outlined in the following diagram:



LARP establishes a long-term vision for the Lower Athabasca Region, providing a basis for activity on the land base over the next 50 years. LARP aligns provincial policies at the regional level to balance economic, environmental and social objectives, utilizing a cumulative effects management approach in its attempt to balance these goals. These three objectives, identified in the section 1(2) of ALSA, were approached in an integrated manner in the development of LARP. The plan outlines the desired outcomes and objectives for the region and articulates a set of strategies, actions, approaches and tools to achieve these outcomes and objectives.

LARP includes the following key components:

- **Strategic Plan:** identifies the vision for the future of the region and how the vision will be achieved. This section also identifies seven RAC Strategic Directions for the region that are designed to help achieve the regional vision and outcomes.
- **Implementation Plan:** includes regional objectives, strategies and actions that will be undertaken to support achievement of the regional vision and indicators and measures to evaluate progress.
- **Regulatory Details Plan:** through the establishment of LARP as a regulation, this section provides the legislative means for achieving the strategies and actions in the Implementation Plan.

LARP identifies the following seven regional outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** The economic potential of the oil sands resource is optimized;
- **Outcome 2:** The region's economy is diversified;
- **Outcome 3:** Landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity;
- **Outcome 4:** Air and water are managed to support human and ecosystem needs;
- **Outcome 5:** Infrastructure development supports economic and population growth;

Outcome 6: The quality of life of residents is enhanced through increased opportunities for recreation and active living; and

Outcome 7: Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning.

In support of and aligned to the regional outcomes, LARP further outlines 16 objectives and 35 strategies aimed at achieving the outcomes. The table contained in Appendix 1 identifies the outcomes, objectives and strategies specific to the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan. For each strategy, LARP identifies a lead Ministry and a timeline, that the strategy is anticipated to be implemented.

LARP includes a number of supporting indicators associated with each of the regional outcomes, identifying the lead Ministry responsible for each indicator. LARP designates an Environmental Management Framework, including limits and triggers, for air quality, surface water quality and groundwater quality.

LARP also includes identified land-uses within LARP boundaries, including identification of permitted activities and digital maps.

IV. Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

Pursuant to section 58(d) of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA)*, LUS has the following mandate with respect to all regional plans:

At least once every 5 years, to appoint a committee under section 63(3)(b) to evaluate the objectives and audit the policies of regional plans for the purpose of determining whether either or both are meeting the purposes of this Act, and to make a public report to the Stewardship Minister on the evaluation and audit.

Under Section 1(2) of the *ALSA*, the purposes of the Act are:

- (a) To provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environmental and social objectives;
- (b) To provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples;
- (c) To provide for the coordination of decisions by decision makers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment;
- (d) To create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking account of and responding to the cumulative effect of human endeavour and other events.

The legislation identifies the purpose of this evaluation as evaluating the objectives and auditing the policies of LARP. Policies are defined in *ALSA* Section 2(1), as "... a strategy, plan, scheme, program or initiative". For the purposes of this report, policies were defined as the strategies identified within the Implementation Plan section of LARP.

This valuation is intended to provide information to enable the Government of Alberta to make informed course-corrections for LARP and in future land-use plans, providing information on whether the systems and processes developed under LUF are enabling land-use plans that meet the purposes of the legislation and are structured to provide direction to decision-makers. This evaluation will provide additional analysis and information to the Province beyond the annual progress reports, which focus on reporting progress of the activities identified in the plan and collecting data on the identified indicators.

As *ALSA* requires a review of each plan at least once every 10 years on its ongoing relevancy and effectiveness, the 5-year evaluation and any resulting course-corrections may contribute to improved results in the 10-year review.

This evaluation focused on examining the systems and processes involved in developing LARP and its objectives and policies, as well as the structure and alignment of the plan. The results of this report will inform the Province in future land use plans, providing information on whether the systems and processes developed under the LUS Framework are enabling land use plans that meet the purposes of the legislation and are structured to provide direction to decision-makers.

As the four purpose statements in ALSA have unique intentions, the Committee evaluated whether the objectives and strategies met each individual purpose statement with the analysis being undertaken and results being reported on a purpose statement-by-purpose statement basis. The objectives and strategies were grouped together as a collective in order to effectively evaluate each purpose statement.

The Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix 2, established the Committee and its scope of work. The Committee was limited to documents in the public domain and engagement only with LUS in undertaking the evaluation. The focus of the evaluation was on the objectives and policies solely within LARP, and the Committee’s work did not include any evaluation of the implementation of LARP, its Progress Reports or any proposed future amendments.

To undertake the evaluation, criteria was developed for each purpose statement to enable the Committee to judge the performance of the objectives and strategies against the purpose statement. The evaluation criteria used are as follows:

ALSA Purpose Statement	Evaluation Criteria
1(2)(a): To provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environment and social objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the objectives and policies provide guidance across economic, environmental and social aspects of the Lower Athabasca Region? • Have the objectives / policies been communicated across government, publicly, and to industry and stakeholders? • Have the objectives / policies been legislated or regulated? • Is there a structure and/or progress in place for ongoing monitoring and reporting on progress on the objectives / policies?
1(2)(b): To provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the objectives / policies provide or contribute to a vision for the future state? • Do the objectives / policies provide guidance to inform decisions makers, industry and stakeholders on moving towards a future state? • Do the objectives / policies provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers (i.e. provincial government, municipal government, industry), either at a regional or sub-regional basis?
1(2)(c): To provide for the coordination of decisions by decision-makers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the objectives / policies pertain to all the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ land, ○ species, ○ human settlement, ○ natural resources, and ○ environment? • Were the objectives / policies developed in a manner that enables coordinated decision-making across government?

ALSA Purpose Statement	Evaluation Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is implementation of the objectives / policies mandatory across government? • Do the objectives / policies provide a framework by which ongoing coordinated decision-making is enabled? • Is implementation of the objectives / policies monitored and tracked across government?
1(2)(d): To create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking account of and responding to the cumulative effect of human endeavour and other events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the plan and legislation identify management strategies to respond to and manage cumulative effects? • Does the plan identify or plan to identify thresholds for acceptable land-use impacts in relation to the objectives and strategies?

The objectives and policies were reviewed against the degree to which the questions were met, using the following criteria:

Rating	Definition	Criteria
Green	Fully addresses the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 concerns raised
Yellow	Mostly addresses the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≤ 2 concerns raised
Red	Does not address the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • > 2 concerns raised

Evidence is cited, and a description provided as to how the evaluation conclusion was arrived at. Evidence citations for specific statements have been identified throughout the Evaluation section of the report (Section V). The naming convention used to cite evidence includes identification of the relevant document referenced in Section VIII [References](#) and associated page number that the statement, for example the reference (4, p.20) refers to page 20 of the document identified as Document #4 in the Reference Section of this Report.

While recommendations for future courses of action are beyond the scope of this evaluation, the results of the evaluation may provide opportunities to indicate where improvements could be made to future land-use plans to better meet the purpose statements of the legislation.

V. Evaluation

Purpose Statement 1: ALSA Section 1(2)(a)

In this section we evaluate whether the objectives and strategies create an environment by which government can provide direction and leadership in identifying the strategic objectives of the Province, including economic, environmental and social objectives. There are a number of elements that contribute to the Government of Alberta’s ability to provide leadership and direction that were examined in relation to LARP objectives and strategies, including:

- Breadth and scope of the Plan in relation to the objectives of the Province;
- Legal nature of the Plan;
- Level of communications;
- Ongoing management; and
- Monitoring and reporting.

In support of these elements, LARP was evaluated against four key questions. The questions and LARP’s fulfillment of the question are summarized in the following dashboard:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(a): to provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environmental and social objectives	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide guidance across economic, environmental and social aspects of the Lower Athabasca Region?</i>	
2. <i>Have the objectives and policies been communicated across government, publicly, and to industry and stakeholders?</i>	
3. <i>Have the objective and policies been legislated or regulated?</i>	
4. <i>Is there a structure and/or processes in place for ongoing monitoring and reporting on progress on the objectives and policies?</i>	

1. ***Do the objectives and policies provide guidance across economic, environmental and social aspects of the Lower Athabasca Region?***

LARP includes a long-term future state vision ^(1, p.22) for the Lower Athabasca Region as follows:

Vision for the Lower Athabasca Region

The Lower Athabasca Region is a vibrant and dynamic region of Alberta. People, industry and government partner to support development of the region and its oil sands reserves. Economic opportunities abound in forestry, minerals, agriculture, infrastructure development, the service industry and tourism. The region’s air, water, land and biodiversity support healthy ecosystems and world class conservation areas. Growing communities are supported by infrastructure and people can enjoy a wide array of recreation and cultural opportunities.

The vision statement includes references to economic opportunities, environmental objectives and social objectives. The vision is supported by a set of three Provincial Outcomes ^(1, p.37) that are applicable to all land-use plans in Alberta and represent the three aspects outlined in the vision, including:

1. Provincial Outcome #1 – Healthy economy supported by our land and resources.
2. Provincial Outcome #2 – Healthy ecosystems and environment.
3. Provincial Outcome # 3 – People-friendly communities with ample recreational and cultural opportunities.

Flowing from the Provincial Outcomes are a set of seven targeted Regional Outcomes ^(1, p.37), each with their own specific objectives and strategies. This structure provides a comprehensive set of outcomes, objectives and strategies that provide a vision across the breadth of economic, environmental and social objectives.

2. *Have the objectives and policies been communicated across government, publicly, and to industry and stakeholders?*

Upon completion of the final draft of the Plan, the document was presented to Cabinet for approval. As an approved document, all Ministries have endorsed and committed to the objectives and strategies contained in the Plan.

LARP was made available, in its entirety, to Alberta citizens, aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, industry and other government staff through posting the document on the LUS website ⁽²⁾. LUS also posts on their website Progress Reports ⁽³⁾ related to LARP, as they are completed, ensuring that all interested parties are able to track progress on LARP.

The extensive consultation and communications activities throughout the development of LARP and post-approval clearly meets the criteria for communicating the objectives and policies across government, publicly, and to industry and stakeholders.

3. *Have the objectives and policies been legislated or regulated?*

On August 22, 2012, under section 4 of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* ⁽⁴⁾, the Lieutenant Governor in Council passed Order in Council 268/2012 ⁽⁵⁾ establishing the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan as a regulation.

As a result, LARP is a legal document and, except where stated otherwise in the Plan, binds the Crown, statutory decision-makers, local government bodies and all other parties undertaking activities within the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan boundary, to comply with the commitments made in the Plan including the objectives and strategies.

4. *Is there a structure and/or processes in place for ongoing monitoring and reporting on progress on the objectives and policies?*

LUS was established under Section 57 of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*, as part of the public service of Alberta but not as part of a government department. LUS reports to a Stewardship Commissioner, who is subject to directives from the Stewardship Minister ^(4, s.57).

Among other responsibilities identified in the Act, LUS is responsible for periodically monitoring progress on the achievement of objectives and the effectiveness of its policies to achieve the objectives, and to issue reports as deemed necessary ^(4, p.61). Within LUS was a group charged with developing the reporting strategies and templates. LUS worked with the responsible ministries to identify the data sets required for reporting and then each ministry was responsible for reporting out on those data sets at prescribed times.

LARP identifies that monitoring, evaluation and reporting are “...key activities for the success of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan” ^(1, p. 65). As a result, commitments are made in the Plan for the systematic collection and storage of data for indicators relating to progress on the LARP outcomes, as well as rigorous evaluation, analysis and interpretation of the data, with responsibility for collecting and analyzing data resting with the Government ^(1, p.65).

Commitments have also been made for formally reporting on progress on LARP ^(1, p.65). For LARP, LUS has publicly released annual Progress Reports on the LUS website, with Progress reports released for 2013 ⁽⁶⁾, 2014 ⁽⁷⁾, 2015 ⁽⁸⁾ and 2016 ⁽⁹⁾.

The Progress Reports provide monitoring and status reporting on those strategies where commitments were made. Progress on these strategies would provide an indication of progress on the related objectives and outcomes. Information in the Progress Reports for each of the strategies includes an identification of the responsible Ministry and a status update ^{(6, p.2) (7, p.5) (8, p.3) (9, p.8)}. In addition to tracking strategies, LARP Progress Reports also track a number of indicators and outcomes, enabling the reader to compare progress year over year on these indicators ^{(6, p.19) (7, p.18) (8, p.36) (9, p.46)}.

Conclusion

The above analysis has identified that LARP has successfully addressed each question, with no minor or significant concerns raised. As a result, the Committee has determined that LARP objectives and strategies **fully** meet the purpose statement under Section 1(2)(a) of the ALSA.

Purpose Statement 2: ALSA Section 1(2)(b)

In this section we evaluate whether the objectives and strategies created a vision or framework that enables planned activities to occur on the landscape. The evaluators recognized that these activities would be occurring across multiple organizations, including the provincial government, local government and industry. In support, LARP was evaluated against three key questions. The questions and LARP’s fulfillment of the question are summarized in the following dashboard:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(b): to provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide or contribute to a vision for the future state?</i>	
2. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide guidance to inform decisions makers, industry and stakeholders on moving towards a future state?</i>	

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
3. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers (i.e. provincial government, municipal government, industry), either at a regional or sub-regional basis?</i>	

1. Do the objectives and policies provide or contribute to a vision for the future state?

The purpose of LARP is identified as setting the stage for robust growth, vibrant communities and a healthy environment within the Lower Athabasca Region over the next 50 years, through the identification of strategic directions for the Lower Athabasca Region over the next 10 years ^(1, p.2).

LARP identifies the current state of the Lower Athabasca Region, including the state of economic development, ecosystems and environment, and human development. As part of LARP Strategic Plan, a regional vision has been developed that describes the desired future state for the Lower Athabasca Region where diverse economic opportunities are balanced with social and environmental conditions using a cumulative effects management approach ^(1, p.22). In this manner, the vision recognizes the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples. Examples of this include:

- Commitment to responsible development of oil sands while recognizing the need for enhanced co-ordination and integration to continue safe, responsible and efficient development ^(1, p.23)
- Careful management of environmental and social impacts associated with long-term opportunities for oil sands development ^(1, p.23)
- Maintenance of acceptable level of air, water, land and biodiversity integrity, while enabling long-term economic benefits ^(1, p.23)
- Retention of skilled workforce to support economic outcomes while ensuring quality of life in the Lower Athabasca Region to meet expectations of residents ^(1, p.23)

2. Do the objectives and policies provide guidance to inform decision-makers, industry and stakeholders on moving towards a future state?

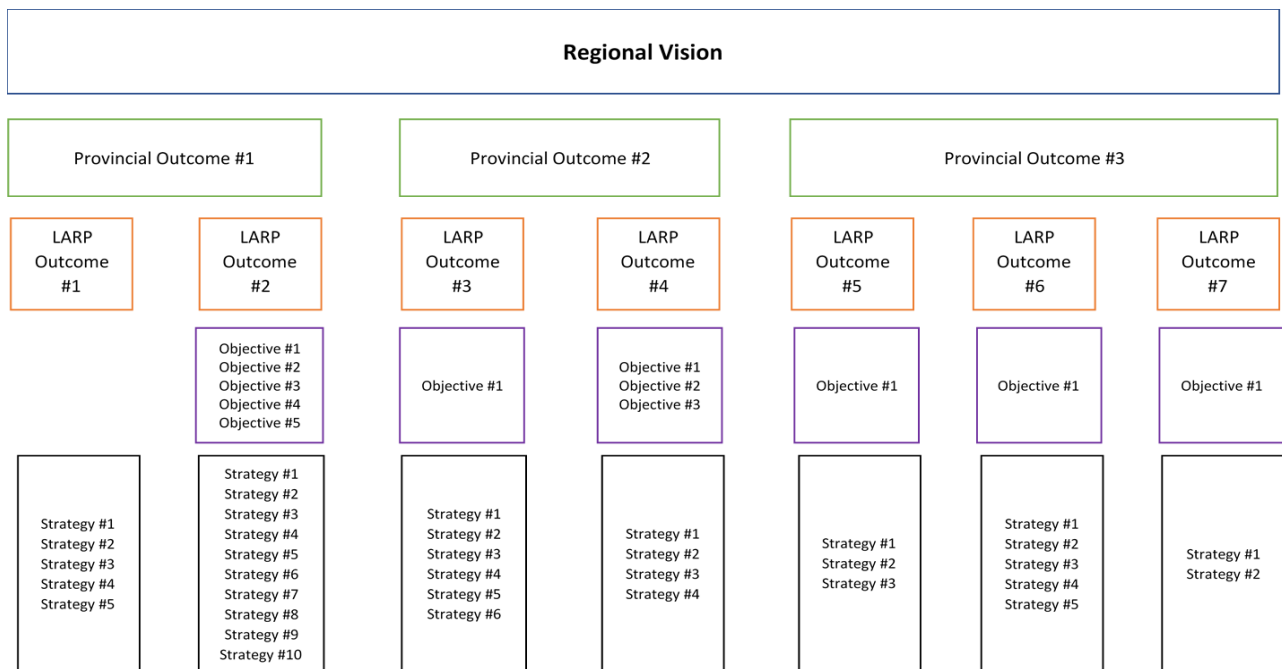
LARP regional vision builds upon the policy frameworks and strategies already in place, including the Provincial Energy Strategy ⁽¹⁰⁾; Responsible Actions: A Plan for Alberta’s Oil Sands ⁽¹¹⁾; Water for Life ⁽¹²⁾; and the Plan for Parks ⁽¹³⁾. The objectives and strategies in LARP are intended to build upon these by setting out strategic directions that support the achievement of the vision and outcomes.

LARP’s vision, objectives and strategies establish a strategic set of directions across land and resource topics for the Lower Athabasca Region that provides direction to decision makers, whether in the Provincial Government, municipal governments or other bodies classified as decision-making bodies under the Act. As LARP has been incorporated into legislation through regulation, this provides further clarity to decision makers on the nature of the guidance.

As LARP is a public document, communicated through the public release of LARP and posting of the document on the LUS website, the objectives and strategies also provide guidance to industry and stakeholders.

3. Do the objectives and policies provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers (i.e. provincial government, municipal government, industry), either at a regional or sub-regional basis?

LARP provides a roadmap or framework of provincial policy direction and intentions, starting at the highest level with the regional Vision, followed by provincial outcomes, regional outcomes, objectives and strategies ^(1, p.37). These are laid out in a clear and logical manner. The following graphic depicts this relationship.

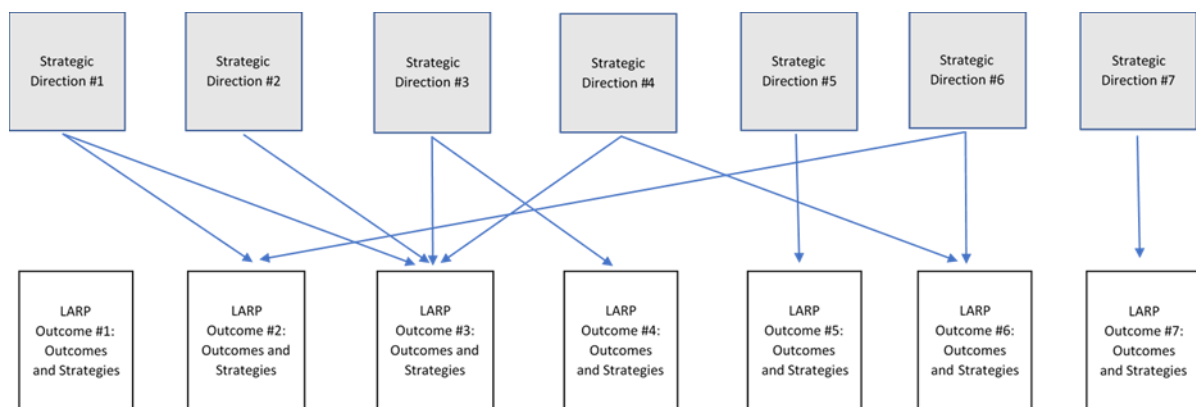


However, LARP also includes seven Strategic Directions ^(1, p.25), each of which includes a mix of Government commitments, statements relating to the desired future state, and intended outcomes. Five of the seven Strategic Directions do not directly align with either LARP Outcome statements or their related strategies. The following table identifies the seven Strategic Directions and their respective commitments, and the alignment to the strategies contained in the LARP Outcomes.

Strategic Directions	Commitments	Alignment to Outcome Strategies
1. Improving integration of industrial activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with the forest industry on strategies to mitigate timber shortfalls Make integrated land management (ILM) between all industrial operators on public land a necessary element of doing business 	Outcome 2 & 3
2. Encouraging timely and progressive reclamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a tailings management framework for mineable oil sands operations 	Outcome 3
3. Managing air, water and biodiversity, and minimizing land disturbance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop management frameworks for air quality, surface water quality and groundwater quality and quantity Monitor ambient air and surface water quality conditions Update surface water quantity management framework for Lower Athabasca River Develop a biodiversity management framework for Lower Athabasca Region on public land in the Green Area and provincial parks Develop a regional landscape plan for public land in the Green Area Develop triggers to guide proactive, early management intervention actions Work with First Nations in developing a biodiversity framework 	Outcome 3 & 4
4. Creating new conservation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage 16% of the region's land base as new conservation areas Engage with First Nations and stakeholders on initiatives to designate motorized access when developing regional parks plan and regional trail system plan 	Outcome 3 & 6
5. Strengthening infrastructure planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize CRISP process to augment planning for areas where oil sands development contributes to growth pressures Meet urban expansion needs in Fort McMurray through release of Crown lands for residential neighbourhoods 	Outcome 5
6. Providing new recreation and tourism opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish nine new provincial recreation areas and five new public land areas for recreation and tourism, to be managed to minimize industrial land disturbance and ensure quality recreational experiences Amend boundaries and uses within Athabasca river and Clearwater River PLART to align with Fort McMurray Urban Development Sub-region Plan and develop Lakeland Country as an iconic tourism destination Work with aboriginal peoples, municipal govts, private sector, interested private landowners and other stakeholders to develop new tourism attractions in Lakeland Country Enhance tourism development through Tourism Development Strategy and Recreation and Tourism Management Strategy for Public Land 	Outcome 2 & 6

Strategic Directions	Commitments	Alignment to Outcome Strategies
7. Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land use planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for opportunities to engage aboriginal communities • Invite First Nations expressing interest in Richardson Backcountry to be involved in sub-regional initiative • Work with aboriginal people to identify tourism and cultural experiences to provide economic opportunities for aboriginal communities 	Outcome 7

The following graphic outlines the relationship between the Strategic Directions and the strategies contained in the Outcomes.



While the Strategic Directions and their associated commitments are not in conflict with or provide opposing direction to the objectives and strategic, they are not aligned with the regional outcomes and their objectives and strategies. As a result of this misalignment, decision-makers are not best positioned to make future plans, either at a regional or sub-regional basis. This concern, however, is believed to be a minor one, versus a substantive issue, as it is not anticipated to impact the implementation of the plan or the achievement of its outcomes in a significant manner.

Conclusion

The above analysis has identified that LARP has largely addressed this purpose statement. However, there is a minor concern raised in association with the question regarding whether the objectives and policies provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers. As a result, the Committee has determined that while LARP objectives and strategies do not fully meet the purpose statement under Section 1(2)(b) of the Act, the objectives and strategies **mostly** meet this purpose statement.

Future land-use plans could improve their ability to provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers through ensuring a clearer alignment between all outcomes, strategies and any Strategic Directions.

Purpose Statement 3: ALSA Section 1(2)(c)

In this section we evaluate whether the objectives and strategies created an environment that fostered coordinated decision-making across land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment.

To understand how LARP supports this purpose statement, it was evaluated against five key questions. The questions and LARP’s fulfillment of the question is summarized in the following dashboard:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(c): to provide for the coordination of decisions by decision-makers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies pertain to all the following areas: land, species, human settlement, natural resources, and environment?</i>	
2. <i>Were the objectives and policies developed in a manner that enables coordinated decision-making across government?</i>	
3. <i>Is the implementation of the objectives and policies mandatory across government?</i>	
4. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide a framework by which ongoing coordinated decision-making is enabled?</i>	
5. <i>Is the implementation of the objectives and policies monitored and tracked across government?</i>	

1. **Do the objectives and policies pertain to all of the following areas: land, species, human settlement, natural resources, and environment?**

LARP was developed with a high level of engagement with a diverse set of stakeholders with varying interests in the Lower Athabasca Region ⁽¹⁴⁾ ⁽¹⁵⁾. This recognition for coordination and shared responsibility for the actions and outcomes of LARP are reflected throughout the document.

LARP has identified policies pertaining to all of the identified areas. The outcomes and supporting objectives and policies provide direct alignment with each of these categories, as outlined in the following table:

Topic Area	LARP Outcome(s)
Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 3: Landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity ^(1, p.42)
Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 3: Landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity ^(1, p.42)
Human Settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 5: Infrastructure development supports economic and population growth ^(1, p.58) Outcome 6: The quality of life of residents is enhanced through increased opportunities for recreation and active living ^(1, p.60)

Topic Area	LARP Outcome(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 7: Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning (1, p.63)
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcomes 1: The economic potential of the oil sands resource is optimized (1, p.37) Outcome 2: The region's economy is diversified (1, p.38)
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 3: Landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity (1, p.42) Outcome 4: Air and water are managed to support human and ecosystem needs (1, p.46)

2. Were the objectives and policies developed in a manner that enables coordinated decision-making across Government?

LARP communicates that one of its purposes is to “provide guidance to provincial and local-decision makers regarding land-use management for the region” (1, p.3). LARP also articulates clearly that it will be implemented by those who already make land-use decisions, at multiple levels across governments (1, p.5). LARP states that these decision-makers must use the plan to inform their policies, and that coordination with other jurisdictions and regions is required to ensure achievement of the objectives and outcomes (1, p.6).

3. Is the implementation of the objectives and policies mandatory across government?

As LARP is a regulation under ALSA, the implementation of the objectives and policies are mandatory across government. LARP provides guidance for implementation across government bodies, while respecting the existing structure of authority and decision-making. In the regulatory details plan, there is an explicit listing of who LARP applies to, including the Crown, land-use decision-makers, and local government bodies (1, p.7).

4. Do the objectives and policies provide a framework by which ongoing coordinated decision-making is enabled?

LARP makes multiple references to the continued engagement with stakeholders in the decision-making process and development of specific actions to implementation. For example, engagement with stakeholders is referenced in the development of a biodiversity management framework for public land in the Green Area¹ (1, p.45), the development of an integrated watershed-based landscape management plan for public land in the Green Area (1, p.45), and development of the Lower Athabasca Regional Trail System Plan (1, p.63). In addition, LARP makes specific mention for various governments to work together in an integrated manner to develop tools in support of implementation (1, p.7).

¹ Green Areas include forested lands, nearly all publicly owned, primarily in northern Alberta with some in the mountains and foothills. Their main uses include timber production, oil and gas development, tourism and recreation, conservation of natural spaces, watershed protection, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Additionally, as part of the cumulative effects management system, a government-wide approach must be taken to implement the strategies ^(1, p.36). Evidence for the framework for ongoing coordinated decision-making can be found in Schedule F ^(1, p.83). The Land Use tables were developed through coordinated efforts across government and with multiple stakeholders. The tables also provide the framework for ongoing coordination for decision-makers when implementing the strategies defined in LARP.

5. Is the implementation of the objectives and policies monitored and tracked across government?

LARP Implementation Plan outlines how the implementation of the regional plan will be monitored and tracked ^(1, p.65). The Province has responsibility for measuring and tracking the indicators identified in LARP, and formally communicating that progress to the public. LARP identifies a lead ministry from across Government for each of its leading indicators ^(1, p.68). LUS manages the ongoing monitoring and reporting for LARP, including coordinating with the relevant lead ministries to gather data and report on results.

Conclusion

The above analysis has identified that LARP has successfully addressed each question, with no concerns raised. As a result, the Committee has determined that LARP objectives and strategies **fully** meet the purpose statement under Section 1(2)(c) of the Act.

Purpose Statement 4: ALSA Section 1(2)(d)

In this section we evaluate whether the objectives and strategies enable sustainable development by considering and managing the impact of cumulative effects on the Lower Athabasca Region.

In support, LARP was evaluated against two key questions. The questions and LARP’s fulfillment of the question is summarized in the following dashboard:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(d): to create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking into account of and responding to the cumulative effects of human endeavour and other events	
1. <i>Does the Plan identify management strategies to respond to and manage cumulative effects?</i>	Green
2. <i>Does the Plan identify or plan to identify thresholds for acceptable land-use impacts in relation to the objectives and strategies?</i>	Green

1. Does the Plan identify management strategies to respond to and manage cumulative effects?

LARP was designed and developed through the cumulative effects management system ^(1, p.3). LARP clearly communicates each element of a cumulative effects management system: it articulates clearly defined outcomes, describes outcomes unique to the Lower Athabasca Region, was

developed and is being monitored through a knowledge-based framework, is flexible and adaptable, and was developed through a shared, collaborative process.

LARP provides clear legislation in relation to the process for the management and response to cumulative effect indicators and triggers. LARP has identified legislation in response to cumulative effects in the following areas:

- Air Quality ^(1, p.48)
- Surface Water Quality ^(1, p.52)
- Groundwater ^(1, p.57)

LARP identifies strategies for monitoring and managing the cumulative effectiveness on the Lower Athabasca Region's air quality ^(1, p.46), water quality and quantity ^(1, p.51 & 55), biodiversity ^(1, p.42 & 64), and land disturbance ^(1, p.42). In addition to existing policies, legislation, regulations, and management tools that already existed, LARP identifies five region-specific management frameworks to monitor and respond to cumulative effects:

1. The Air Quality Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca Region ^(1, p.46)
2. The Surface Water Quality Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca River ^(1, p.51)
3. The Groundwater Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca Region ^(1, p.55)
4. The Biodiversity Management Framework for public land in the Green Area and provincial parks in the Lower Athabasca Region ^(1, p.45)
5. The Integrated, watershed-based Landscape Management Plan for public lands in the Green Area in the Lower Athabasca Region ^(1, p.45)

2. Does the Plan identify or plan to identify thresholds for acceptable land-use impacts in relation to the objectives and strategies?

LARP identifies thresholds for acceptable land-use impacts for the following areas:

- For Air Quality: LARP articulates indicators, limits, and triggers for countering and responding to cumulative effects ^(1, p.73)
- For Surface Water Quality: LARP articulates indicators, limits, and triggers for countering and responding to cumulative effects ^(1, p.74)
- For Groundwater Quality: LARP defines indicators and interim groundwater quality triggers ^(1, p.77). LARP identifies the steps required to finalize the triggers and define actions and responses to counter the cumulative effects as part of finalizing the Framework ^(1, p.55).

In addition to the thresholds identified for air, surface water, and groundwater quality, LARP identifies additional steps for the development of thresholds and management steps for biodiversity in the Lower Athabasca Region ^(1, p.45). LARP also identifies the steps to be taken to identify and collect information and key processes that will be used to coordinate landscape planning activities that minimize disruption and impacts ^(1, p.45).

Conclusion

The above analysis has identified that LARP has successfully addressed each question, with no concerns raised. As a result, the Committee has determined that LARP objectives and strategies **fully** meet the purpose statement under Section 1(2)(d) of the Act.

VI. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 5-Year Evaluation Conclusion

In accordance with Section 58(d) of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* and within the scope of the Committee’s Terms of Reference, the Committee has completed its evaluation of the objectives and policies of the Regional Plan to determine whether either or both are meeting the purposes of the Act. The evaluation analysis suggests that the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan is either fully or mostly meeting the purpose statements set out under Section 1(2) of the Act.

For three of the four purposes statements, the Committee found that LARP fully meets the purpose statement. However, the Committee found that LARP fell short of fully meeting Section 1(2)(b) of the Act, which is in regard to whether LARP provides a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples.

The summary of the findings is outlined in the following table:

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(a): to provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environmental and social objectives	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide guidance across economic, environmental and social aspects of the Lower Athabasca Region?</i>	
2. <i>Have the objective and policies been communicated across government, publicly, and to industry and stakeholders?</i>	
3. <i>Have the objective and policies been legislated or regulated?</i>	
4. <i>Is there a structure and/or processes in place for ongoing monitoring and reporting on progress on the objectives and policies?</i>	
ALSA Section 1(2)(b): to provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide or contribute to a vision for the future state?</i>	
2. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide guidance to inform decisions makers, industry and stakeholders on moving towards a future state?</i>	
3. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide a basis from which to inform future plans by decision-makers (i.e. provincial government, municipal government, industry), either at a regional or sub-regional basis?</i>	

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Rating
ALSA Section 1(2)(c): to provide for the coordination of decisions by decisionmakers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment	
1. <i>Do the objectives and policies pertain to all the following areas: land, species, human settlement, natural resources, and environment?</i>	
2. <i>Were the objectives and policies developed in a manner that enables coordinated decision-making across government?</i>	
3. <i>Is the implementation of the objectives and policies mandatory across government?</i>	
4. <i>Do the objectives and policies provide a framework by which ongoing coordinated decision-making is enabled?</i>	
5. <i>Is the implementation of the objectives and policies monitored and tracked across government?</i>	
ALSA Section 1(2)(d): to create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking into account of and responding to the cumulative effects of human endeavour and other events	
1. <i>Does the Plan identify management strategies to respond to and manage cumulative effects?</i>	
2. <i>Does the Plan identify or plan to identify thresholds for acceptable land-use impacts in relation to the objectives and strategies?</i>	

The Committee raised the concern that there was a minor lack of alignment with the commitments made in the Strategic Directions to the Regional Outcomes and their associated objectives and strategies. While there were no inconsistencies or contradictions between the Strategic Directions and the Regional Outcomes, there was sufficient misalignment to have the potential to create confusion for decision-makers. This issue was deemed to be a minor issue, versus a substantive issue, as it is not anticipated to impact the implementation of the plan or the achievement of its outcomes in a significant manner.

This concern can be addressed in future land-use plans by ensuring that there is a clear and logical alignment across all commitments made.

VII. Report Submission

In fulfilment of the final element of its mandate, the Committee is submitting this Report to the Stewardship Minister, consistent with the requirements outlined in Section 58(d) the *Act*.

The Committee would like to express its appreciation to the LUS staff for the support and assistance they have provided in completing this report.

VIII. References

1. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Lower%20Athabasca%20Regional%20Plan%202012-2022%20Approved%202012-08.pdf>
2. Land Use Secretariat Website
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/LowerAthabascaRegion/Pages/default.aspx>
3. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Progress Reports
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/ResultsResources/ResultsReporting/Pages/default.aspx>
4. *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*
<http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/A26P8.pdf>
5. *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Order in Council
http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/orders/orders_in_council/2012/812/2012_268.pdf
6. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 2013 Progress Report
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Land-use%20Framework%20Regional%20Plans%20Progress%20Report%202013.pdf>
7. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 2014 Progress Report
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Land-use%20Framework%20Regional%20Plans%20Progress%20Report%202014.pdf>
8. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 2015 Progress Report
https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/LUF%20Progress%20Report%202015%20Final_2017-11-29%20PUBLIC.pdf
9. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 2016 Progress Report
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Progress%20Report%202016%20-%20Final%20PDF.pdf>
10. Launching Alberta's Energy Future. Provincial Energy Strategy
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/6f220382-b4ae-43f8-b3f9-7c1230e6700e/resource/e7c2f3d2-7e0d-4774-a463-c54c5450a04e/download/4256197-2009-launching-albertas-energy-future-provincial-enregy-strategy-2009-08-27.pdf>
11. Responsible Actions: A Plan for Alberta's Oil Sands
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/d1a56e4a-9b36-4068-94ba-dfbc042784c8/resource/4974c0fe-5bdf-4480-9861-4a681ac6d740/download/4284820-2009-OSS-Responsible-Actions-Plan-Albertas-Oil-Sands-2009-02.pdf>

12. Water for Life: a renewal (2008)
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/16e373f7-35c6-438c-8028-b9ab7e3e2fee/resource/bd7930bf-da3b-449a-8630-ef0b11dde99e/download/waterforlife-renewal-nov2008.pdf>
13. Plan for Parks
<https://www.albertaparks.ca/media/123436/p4p.pdf>
14. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Advisory Council
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/LowerAthabascaRegion/LARPRAC/Pages/default.aspx>
15. Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Consultation
<https://landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/LowerAthabascaRegion/LARPConsultation/Pages/default.aspx>

IX. Appendices

Appendix 1: LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies Table

Appendix 2: 5-Year Evaluation Committee Terms of Reference

Appendix 1: LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies

LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies
Outcome 1: The economic potential of the oil sands resource is optimized
<p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue implementation of the Alberta Provincial Energy Strategy and Responsible Actions: A Plan for Alberta’s Oil Sands • Continued implementation of improved regulatory processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development a sub-regional plan using a strategic environmental assessment approach for the south Athabasca oil sands area • Continued implementation of the Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce strategy • Implementation of key recommendations in Connecting the Dots: Aboriginal Workforce and Economic Development in Alberta
Outcome 2: The region’s economy is diversified
Objective: Maintain and diversify the region’s forest industry
<p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent future shortfalls in timber supply through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using an integrated land management approach ○ The forest industry identifying opportunities to enhance the management of forest stands and regeneration on public land • Minimize loss of productive forest timber volume by government and industry supporting wildfire management planning initiatives • Promote diversification of the forest industry through implementation of the Alberta Forest Products Roadmap to 2020
Objective: Maintain and diversify the region’s agricultural industry
<p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities are encouraged to identify areas where agriculture activities should be the primary land-use in the region • Municipalities are encouraged to limit the fragmentation of agricultural lands and their premature conversion to other non-agricultural uses • Where possible, municipalities are encouraged to direct non-agricultural subdivision and development to areas where such development will not constrain agricultural activities or to areas of lower-quality agricultural lands • Municipalities are encouraged to minimize conflicts between intensive agricultural operations and incompatible land-uses by using appropriate planning tools, setback distances and other mitigative measures
Objective: Tourism potential of the region is optimized
<p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement the Lakeland Country Destination Development Strategy and Tourism Opportunity plan in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, municipalities and local stakeholders • Work collaboratively with local aboriginal communities, the private sector and local governments to enhance and expand the supply of tourism products and infrastructure

LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies

- Identify, designate and market tourism development nodes in consultation with aboriginal peoples, municipalities and stakeholders
- Complete tourism opportunity assessments for Quarry of the Ancestors, Bitumont and fort Chipewyan
- Work with municipal governments and other partners to establish and promote a Scenic Byways Network in and around areas with high quality attractions

Objective: Opportunities for the responsible exploration, development and extraction of energy, mineral and coal resources are maintained

Strategies:

- Rules regarding physical access to energy, mineral and coal resources are clear
- Policies are developed that promote new investments in energy, mineral and coal resource development

Objective: Opportunities for the responsible development of surface materials resources are maintained on public lands

Strategies:

- Allocate surface materials appropriately and monitor extraction operations to provide opportunities for sustainable development of the land

Outcome 3: Landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity

Objective:

- (a) Enhance the regional network of conservation areas to support biodiversity and ecosystem function.**
- (b) Regional biodiversity objectives are developed for various indicators of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity in the region.**
- (c) Land disturbance impacts to biodiversity should be avoided and mitigated.**
- (d) Increase the rate of reclamation and enhance the reduction of tailing ponds.**

Strategies:

- Create new conservation areas on provincial Crown Land
- Manage existing conserved lands to achieve long-term conservation of biological diversity and ecosystem processes
- Develop a biodiversity management framework for public land in the Green Area and provincial parks in the region by the end of 2013. The framework will be developed in association with aboriginal communities, municipalities, industry stakeholders and the public to include (a) indicators; and (b) measurement
- Develop an integrated, watershed-based landscape management plan for public lands in the Green Area in the region by the end of 2013. The plan will be developed in association with aboriginal communities, municipalities, industry stakeholders and the public to include specific components identified in the plan.
- Complete a tailings management framework
- Implement the progressive reclamation strategy

Outcome 4: Air and water are managed to support human and ecosystem needs

Objective: Releases from various sources are managed so they do not collectively result in unacceptable air quality

LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies

Strategies:

- Implement the Air Quality Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca Region

Objective: Water quality in the Lower Athabasca River is managed so current and future water uses are protected

Strategies:

- Implement the Surface Water Quality Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca River

Objective:

(a) Groundwater quality is protected from contamination by maintaining conditions within the range of natural variability and not exceeding established limits.

(b) Groundwater resources continue to support human and ecosystem needs, and the integrity of the regional flow system is maintained

Strategies:

- Complete and implement the Groundwater Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca Region

Strategies:

- Complete an updated surface water quantity management framework for the Lower Athabasca River

Outcome 5: Infrastructure development supports economic and population growth

Objective: The region’s infrastructure and land base available for development are planned to facilitate population and economic growth and efficient use

Strategies:

- Use the Comprehensive Regional Infrastructure Sustainability Plan (CRISP) process to augment and facilitate the planning in the region where oil sands development will create rapid growth and significant development pressures
 - Plan for a Fort McMurray urban Development Sub-region
- Ensure that opportunities for future routes and siting for pipeline gateways, transportation corridors and utility and electrical transmission corridors are maintained in the region and in consideration of the needs of adjacent regions and jurisdictions
- Utilize the minimum amount of land required for developments
- Plan, design and locate future development in a manner that utilizes existing infrastructure and minimizes the need for new or expanded infrastructure
- Identify critical economic linkages to the markets, including (5 identified areas)

Outcome 6: The quality of life of residents is enhanced through increased opportunities for recreation and active living

Objective: Provide a wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities that meet the preferences of regional residents and visitors

Strategies:

- Designate new provincial recreation areas to address growing demand for recreational opportunities and provide a secure land base to support tourism development
- Create new public land areas for recreation and tourism that contain unique features, scenery or settings

LARP Outcomes, Objectives and Strategies

- Develop the regional parks plan for the Lower Athabasca
- In collaboration with aboriginal and other communities, stakeholders and partners, co-ordinate the development of the Lower Athabasca Regional Trail System Plan
- Collect regional data in the form of a recreation and tourism resource inventory that includes the completion of a scenic resource assessment inventory and a regional recreational demand and satisfaction survey

Outcome 7: Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning

Objective: To encourage aboriginal peoples' participation in land-use planning and input to decision-making in recognition of the cultural and economic importance of land-use to those aboriginal communities with constitutionally protected rights.

Strategies:

- In accordance with applicable government policy, continue to consult with aboriginal peoples in a meaningful way then government decisions may adversely affect the continued exercise of their constitutionally protected rights
- Engage aboriginal communities in the development of the Lower Athabasca Regional Trail System Plan
- Engage aboriginal communities in the development of a surface water quantity management framework for the Lower Athabasca River
- Engage aboriginal communities on initiatives to support tourism development including (5 identified opportunities)
- Invite First Nations expressing an interest in the Richards Backcountry to be involved in a sub-regional initiative called the First Nations-Richardson Backcountry Stewardship Initiative
- In developing a biodiversity management framework and a landscape management plan, work with First Nations to consider how exercise of constitutionally protected rights can continue within reasonable proximity of First Nations' main population centres and how to minimize land disturbance in the Athabasca River corridor north of Fort McMurray

5-Year Evaluation of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Terms of Reference

1. Legislative Authority

Pursuant to the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA) section 58(d), the Land Use Secretariat has the following mandate with respect to regional plans and proposed regional plans:

58(d) At least once every 5 years, to appoint a committee under section 63(3)(b) to evaluate the objectives and audit the policies of regional plans for the purpose of determining whether either or both are meeting the purposes of this Act, and to make a public report to the Stewardship Minister on the evaluation and audit.

The 5-year evaluation is a legislatively required, scheduled assessment to determine whether the regional plan is meeting the purpose statements outlined in the Act.

Unless stipulated otherwise in the regional plan or an amendment to the regional plan, this evaluation includes any and all amendments made to the regional plan since the plan came into effect.

The Land Use Secretariat, headed by the Stewardship Commissioner, carries out this evaluation by appointing an independent body to evaluate the objectives and audit the policies of a regional plan to determine whether they are meeting the needs of ALSA then submit their public report to the Stewardship Minister.

This Terms of Reference prescribes the scope and responsibilities of the 5-Year Evaluation Committee for the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP).

2. Committee Scope

The Committee's scope will be limited to LARP and will not assess other approved or draft regional plans, proposed future amendments to the plan, unnamed sub-regional or issue-specific plans, or municipal or local plans.

The Committee will focus its evaluation on formal, written materials in the public domain that are referenced in LARP and other materials provided by the Land Use Secretariat. The Committee will limit the evaluation of objectives and audit of policies to those that are specifically identified or introduced by LARP to determine whether they *are* or *are not* meeting the purpose statements outline in ALSA section 1(2).

The committee will primarily utilize the following documents as part of its evaluation:

- The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP)
- 2013 Land-use Framework Progress Report
- 2014 Land-use Framework Progress Report
- 2015 Land-use Framework Progress Report
- 2016 Land-use Framework Progress Report

Committee members will not interview any groups or persons, hold hearings or inquiries, request information from sources other than the Land Use Secretariat or base any assessments on undocumented materials.

The Committee does not make recommendations, suggestions or otherwise comment on matters outside of this jurisdiction. Committee members do not have authority:

- to provide information or advice to non-members or solicit opinions from non-members,
- to take action solely on the basis of the advice, or
- to identify, suggest or award any form of exemption or compensation.

3. Committee Membership

As a result of a public procurement process undertaken by LUS, Elevate Consulting was the successful proponent hired to provide independent and unbiased support for the evaluation of regional plans, including LARP.

4. Committee Deliverables

The Committee will evaluate the objectives and audit the policies of LARP for the purpose of determining whether either or both are meeting the purposes of ALSA. Upon concluding the evaluation and audit analysis, the Committee will prepare a public report for the Stewardship Minister. The report will:

- present findings having regard to the purposes of ALSA;
- identify objectives and/or policies within a plan that *do* or *do not* meet the purposes of ALSA; and provides a description, analysis or explanation of these findings;
- provide evidence of findings, cites sources and identify areas where information is insufficient to conduct an evaluation; and
- contain a brief executive summary outlining legislative requirements, approach and findings of the 5-Year Evaluation Committee.

5. Conduct

The Committee members recognize independence and impartiality are integral to their function. Members conduct their duties with impartiality and integrity.

As a result, the Committee members will not comment publicly or privately on the matters included in this Terms of Reference, will not release confidential or privileged information, will not receive gifts perceived to be connected with their duties, and will not further their own private interests.

The Committee will avoid any conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest and immediately disclose to the Land Use Secretariat or Stewardship Commissioner any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest which may bring the Committee's impartiality or integrity into question.

6. Administration

The Committee will designate an individual that will:

- operate as a liaison with government;
- govern operations, resources and development of the report;
- request, in writing, additional required information from the Land Use Secretariat;
- escalate, if necessary, issues and concerns with the Stewardship Commissioner;
- work collaboratively with LUS to ensure requirements described within these terms are met;
- submit the Committee's report to the Stewardship Minister, via the Stewardship Commissioner, on or before the report due date;
- present, if required and as requested by LUS, Committee findings and respond to questions that may arise as a result of the evaluation; and
- protect substantive materials, dispose of transitory materials and complete all business.

7. Term

The Committee is established upon the date of approval of this Terms of Reference. These Terms of Reference and the Committee will remain in effect until the final Evaluation Report is presented to the Stewardship Minister, upon which date these Terms of Reference and the Committee will expire.

8. Submission of Report

The Evaluation Report will be submitted by the Committee on or before the due date established by the Stewardship Commissioner, and will be:

- submitted, as an original in paper form, to the office of the Stewardship Minister, via the Stewardship Commissioner, on or before the due date;
- accompanied by a signed cover letter to the Stewardship Minister from the Committee citing the legislative requirement fulfilled by the report; and
- submitted, as an exact duplicate electronic copy of the original report, directly to the Stewardship Commissioner and Land Use Secretariat.

9. Public Communication

Once submitted by the Committee the Land Use Secretariat manages the report and all other substantive materials used as input as records, including making the report public by whichever means the Secretariat deems appropriate.

The Land Use Secretariat, working closely with the Committee, will respond to enquiries from stakeholders, partners, decision-makers, government, indigenous peoples and Albertans regarding legislative requirements, the process and the public report. The Committee will redirect all inquiries to the Land Use Secretariat for response.