



Standards in Focus

The new Canadian Standard on Sustainability Assurance (CSSA) 5000,
General Requirements for Sustainability Assurance Engagements

June 2026

Why is CSSA 5000 needed?

In response to the growing demand for rigorous, independent assurance over sustainability information¹, the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB) issued the International Standard on Sustainability Assurance (ISSA) 5000, General Requirements for *Sustainability Assurance Engagements* in November 2024.

On March 9, 2026, Canada's Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (AASB) officially adopted the standard as CSSA 5000 to maintain international convergence. This finalised standard features Canadian amendments related to the effective date and alignment with Canada's ethical requirements.

CSSA 5000 was issued without the proposed Canadian amendment addressing Indigenous matters. The AASB is currently deliberating feedback on the Re-Exposure Draft, with final approval anticipated by spring 2027.

Who is impacted?

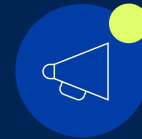
All sustainability assurance practitioners, particularly those currently using Canadian Standard on Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3000, *Attestation Engagement other than Audits and Reviews of Historical Financial Information* and CSAE 3410, *Assurance Engagements on Greenhouse Gas Statements*, as well as preparers and users of sustainability information seeking investor-grade assurance.

When is CSSA 5000 effective?

Effective for assurance engagements on sustainability information reported for periods beginning on or after December 15, 2027, or as at a specific date on or after December 15, 2027. Early application is permitted.

1 Examples of sustainability information include environmental metrics (such as greenhouse gas emissions, energy and water usage), workforce and safety metrics, governance and risk management practices, as well as forward-looking targets and transition plans.

CSSA 5000 aims to:



PROMOTE

Promote a consistent and high quality approach to sustainability assurance engagements, regardless of the sustainability topics reported or the reporting framework used.



STRENGTHEN

Strengthen the quality and rigor of sustainability assurance by embedding core assurance concepts such as professional judgment, professional skepticism, materiality, risk based procedures, sufficient appropriate evidence, ethical requirements and quality management.



ENHANCE

Enhance the credibility of sustainability information by establishing a consistent framework for sustainability assurance engagements resulting in more transparent, reliable and decision useful assurance conclusions.

What do CPAs need to know?

Background

Prior to the effective date of CSSA 5000, assurance engagements over sustainability information were performed under:

- CSAE 3000, *Attestation Engagement other than Audits and Reviews of Historical Financial Information*
- CSAE 3410, *Assurance Engagements on Greenhouse Gas Statements*

Once CSSA 5000 becomes effective on December 15, 2027, CSAE 3410 will be withdrawn and CSAE 3000 can no longer be used for sustainability assurance engagements.

CSSA 5000 will be the sole standard for sustainability assurance engagements with additional and enhanced requirements.

While CSSA 5000 governs sustainability matters, CSAE 3000 will continue to apply to attestation engagements on subject matters other than historical financial information or sustainability information.

Overview of CSSA 5000

- **Stand-alone standard:** Overarching standard that addresses baseline requirements for the entire assurance process for sustainability information; from engagement acceptance and continuance to concluding and reporting.
- **Assurance level:** Designed for both reasonable and limited attestation assurance engagements over sustainability information. It clearly distinguishes and labels requirements specific to reasonable assurance and limited assurance.
- **Framework neutral:** Applies to assurance on sustainability information prepared under any sustainability reporting framework or criteria (e.g. Canadian or IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards, Global Reporting Initiative, jurisdictional laws or regulations, etc.).
- **Broad topic scope:** Applies to all types of sustainability information, regardless of how it is presented (e.g. within a standalone ESG report, as part of an annual or integrated report or a regulatory filing). An assurance engagement may cover either part or the entirety of an entity's sustainability information.

- **Profession agnostic:** Can be used by any assurance practitioner, including both professional accountants and non-accountants.
- **Attestation focus:** The standard specifically covers attestation engagements². For direct engagements³ on sustainability matters, practitioners should continue to apply CSAE 3001, *Direct Engagements*.

What are the key requirements?

The following highlights some of the key requirements in CSSA 5000.

1. Group sustainability information

CSSA 5000 can be applied to sustainability assurance for a stand-alone entity or for a group. The concept of a “group” in CSSA 5000 is broader than in auditing standards, as it extends beyond legal ownership or control structures and can include other entities in the value chain of the reporting entity. Under CSSA 5000, a “group” can be any of the following:

- A parent entity and subsidiaries
- A single legal entity organized with branches or divisions
- A single legal entity that includes information from other entities that are part of the value chain of the entity

A value chain encompasses the full spectrum of activities, resources and relationships required to create a product or deliver service, from upstream supply networks to downstream consumption and end-of-life disposal. This definition spans operations within the reporting entity as well as external entities outside its direct control.

As part of the risk assessment procedures, CSSA 5000 requires practitioners to understand the entity's process to identify sustainability information to be reported and identify and assess risks of material misstatement across the entire reporting boundary⁴, including risks arising in the value chain (CSSA 5000 paragraph C18).

2 In an attestation engagement, the practitioner assures information prepared by others, usually management.

3 In a direct engagement, the practitioner directly measures or evaluates the underlying subject matter against suitable criteria and expresses a conclusion.

4 The reporting boundary defines which activities, entities, operations and parts of the value chain are covered by the information being reported. The reporting boundary is determined in accordance with applicable reporting framework or criteria.

2. Other information

CSSA 5000 specifies practitioners' responsibilities when sustainability information is presented alongside "other information", such as audited financial statements in an annual or integrated report.

While other information is not subject to the sustainability assurance engagement, practitioners are required to read the other information and consider whether there is a material inconsistency between the sustainability information and the other information (CSSA 5000 paragraphs 171 – 177).

Under the standard, other information is formally defined as "Information not subject to the assurance engagement included in a document or documents containing the sustainability information subject to the assurance engagement and the assurance report thereon."

3. Sustainability-specific approach to materiality

Sustainability information can be a mix of qualitative and quantitative disclosures across different topics, each with varying user needs and tolerances for misstatement. As a result, sustainability assurance engagements ordinarily involve multiple materialities.

CSSA 5000 therefore introduces a "bifurcated" approach to materiality (paragraphs 98–100):

- **Materiality for qualitative disclosures:** Practitioners consider relevant factors and apply professional judgment to assess whether omissions or narrative misstatements could influence users' decisions, without using a numerical threshold.
- **Materiality for quantitative disclosures:** Practitioners establish numerical thresholds to evaluate whether misstatements are material, aligning with the approach used in traditional financial reporting models.

Multiple materialities often apply to qualitative disclosures. For example, the materiality used to assess the risk of material misstatement in information about a hazardous spill will differ from that applied to narrative disclosures on food waste reduction initiatives.

Similarly, quantitative disclosures can involve distinct materialities; the materiality established for GHG emissions will inherently differ from the materiality used to assess workforce injuries.

4. Using the work of others

CSSA 5000 requires practitioners to appropriately evaluate the qualification/competence, objectivity, and the sufficiency of work performed by others.

The standard also requires practitioners to clearly determine the extent to which such work can be relied upon in forming the assurance conclusion.

The standard sets out distinct requirements for (CSSA 5000 paragraphs 50–59):

- Using the work of another practitioner (e.g. component auditor)
- Using the work of a practitioner's expert
- Using the work of the internal audit function

5. Estimates and forward-looking information

Estimates and forward-looking information are fundamental to sustainability reporting and are often subject to significant estimation uncertainty, the use of judgment by management, the use of professional judgement by the practitioner, and challenges in obtaining sufficient appropriate evidence. Examples of forward-looking information and estimates include:

- Scope 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions⁵
- Estimated financial impacts of sustainability related risks or opportunities
- Climate scenario analysis (e.g. 1.5°C or 2°C scenarios)
- Resilience or stress testing analyses assessing how strategies perform under different future conditions

5 Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions linked to a company's activities that occur across its value chain, outside its own operations, such as from suppliers, product use and waste. Emissions data from value chain entities may not be readily available and often need to be estimated.

CSSA 5000 includes specific requirements in relation to estimates and forward-looking information, including:

- Obtaining an understanding of how the entity identifies relevant methods, assumptions or sources of data, and the need for changes in them, that are appropriate in the context of the applicable criteria (CSSA 5000 paragraph 117c).
- Evaluating whether judgments and estimates made, and assumptions used by management indicate possible management bias (CSSA 5000 paragraph 146R).

6. Ethical and quality management requirements

CSSA 5000 has ethical and quality management requirements. Some key requirements include:

Feature	Requirement under CSSA 5000
Competence	The engagement team must collectively have the appropriate competence, and competence and capabilities in assurance skills to perform the engagement, including the use of others where necessary. (CSSA 5000 paragraph 26(b))
Ethical Standards	Practitioners must comply with relevant rules of professional conduct/code of ethics issued by various professional accounting bodies; or other professional requirements or requirements by laws or regulations that are at least as demanding. (CSSA 5000 paragraph C34)
Quality Management	Engagements must be performed by a firm that applies: Canadian Standard on Quality Management (CSQM) 1 , or other professional requirements, or requirements in law or regulation that an appropriate authority has determined to be at least as demanding (CSSA 5000 paragraph 30) and, where applicable, engagement quality reviews (CSQM 2).



What Can You Do?

1

Read CSSA 5000 and its Basis for Conclusions available for CPAs via [Knotia.ca](https://www.knotia.ca).

READ IT

2

Regularly visit CPA Ontario's **Guidance on Compliance Knowledge Hub** to stay current on evolving standards.

CHECK FOR UPDATES

3

Visit IAASB ISSA 5000 resource page for the Implementation Guide and FAQs.

READ IT

4

Contact Professional Advisory Services by phone at **416 204.3106** or **1 800 387.0735 x 4456** or email us.

EMAIL US

Disclaimer

This article is intended for general informational purposes only. **It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with CSSA 5000, General Requirements for Sustainability Assurance Engagements, as outlined in the Assurance Handbook,** based on your specific situation. In the event of any discrepancy between this article and the applicable official standards or guidance, the official sources shall prevail. Users are encouraged to consult the original sources for complete and authoritative information.