

Waterline



SUMMER 2024

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Message from the CEO

Hello and welcome to this issue of *Waterline*.

Summer is here and I hope that wherever you are in the province, you've been enjoying the warmer weather and opportunity to be with friends and family.



It's been a busy and productive time at OCWA. For the first time in several years, this April OCWA held a leadership conference. This event gathered the leadership team from across the agency to exchange ideas, develop priorities, discuss strategy, drive leadership accountability, and continue to learn together. The energy and the connection in the room was empowering! I am proud to be part of a passionate and dedicated team at OCWA who are providing solutions and services to all the communities that we serve. I feel confident that we are the strongest we have ever been as a team and will continue to become even stronger as we move forward.

I have continued to settle into my role as President & CEO and focus on team building and our priorities, including the Agency's Strategic Directions plan: *Vision for a Sustainable Future*.

This people- and process-centric plan outlines improved processes, new work practices, stronger utilization of tools, standardization of training, supporting climate action, partnering with First Nations, and developing career opportunities. These strategies will help to ensure OCWA's growth and sustainability for the long-term to best support our provincial mandates and for the benefit of all OCWA customers and partners. We are excited about implementing the plan and look forward to sharing more with our stakeholders in

the near future.

The spring was also busy with industry conferences and events, and I've had the pleasure of being able to connect with many of you in person. If you see me at an event, please stop to say hello and have a chat! Over the next while, I will also be travelling around the province to visit OCWA client communities and customers. I look forward to meeting with you, whether on the road or in your home community, and learning more about your water, wastewater and stormwater needs. In the meantime, you are always welcome to reach out to me.

We all know the critical impact that water and wastewater infrastructure has on the health, safety, sustainability and overall prosperity of a community. Asset Management and its planning is not only part of the service and solution that we provide, but also one of the key priorities at OCWA. As our communities and clients are further focusing on best approaches to keep buried and linear infrastructure in a state of good repair, OCWA is well positioned to provide support. I encourage you to read more about our work in this area in this issue of *Waterline*.

Also in this issue, many of you may know that OCWA refreshed its Vision, Mission and Values in recent years. They are central to who we are as an organization and provide guidance for everything we do. We will introduce you to two new OCWA initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to living our values of "Safety" and "Diversity" – the STOP Health & Safety Program and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Blueprint. I hope that you will take a moment to read about them, and to explore the full [Blueprint](#) document.

You will also get an update on our OneWater Education Program, which was relaunched in the 2023-24 school year, as well as information about our refreshed website and a round-up of the 2024 conference season so far.

We close the issue by remembering two members of our executive team who passed away earlier this year, Robin Kind and Jason Speers. Robin and Jason were not only a big part of the OCWA family but also well-known and respected leaders in our industry. They are both deeply missed.

Thank you for spending time to catch up on OCWA news. I hope that you enjoy this issue of *Waterline*. As a client partner, we remain committed to keeping you satisfied with our services in this ever-changing environment.

All the best for a safe and happy summer.

~ Iman Hashemi, President & CEO

A Changing Approach to Asset Management

Using Asset Performance Rather than Age is Key to Proper Forecasting and Wise Spending

Asset Management has been around since the late 2000s, but it has changed significantly in Ontario over the past decade. OCWA works with system owners to support them in making informed decisions regarding planning and financing

capital projects, ensuring the sustainability of their water and wastewater infrastructure. We asked [Nick Larson](#), OCWA's Director of Business and Asset Management Standards, how Asset Management has evolved, what that means for system owners, and how OCWA's approach supports the needs of our municipal and community partners.

1. Asset Management has been around for a long time – what is changing?

I think that water/wastewater system owners are beginning to see that early approaches to Asset Management have not helped them to properly forecast what they should spend on their assets in the medium and long term or show them what they can expect to get for their investment. The fundamental question they need answered is: Should we be spending twice as much on capital, half as much on capital, or about the same? Early approaches to Asset Management did provide system owners with asset inventories and a general idea of the value of these assets, which are both good things – but they did not equip system owners to answer that fundamental question.

2. What does this mean for system owners?

I'll answer this by digging a bit deeper into forecasting. You need good quality, reliable data to determine where assets are in their lifecycle and to properly forecast timelines and costs associated with rehabilitating and replacing those assets. The early approaches to Asset Management commonly provided forecasts of single assets based solely on age – but in our experience that can be misleading and costly.

Let's say your municipality put in a whole water system in 1974. You may have an Asset Management Plan (AMP) that states the estimated service life of a water pipe is 50 years and therefore you should replace all the pipes in 2024. There is no engineering rationale for this forecast.

Forecasting based on subjective condition can also be problematic. I can show you a valve that has some surface corrosion and looks old, but it performs as required. The valve is used infrequently and all it requires is occasional exercising.

OCWA relies on asset performance rather than age or subjective condition for forecasting. Performance is defined as the ability to fulfill objectives/requirements, like the example of the poor-looking valve. It was still performing well or "fit for purpose." Of course, the opposite can be true. You can have an asset that is in good physical condition but is not fit for purpose because it has insufficient capacity or replacement parts are no longer available.

System owners need to know that just because an asset is old or looks a bit rough on the surface, they don't necessarily need to spend money on it right now – which helps them prioritize other projects. Instead, you want to look at how assets are performing. This results in much better forecasting, which leads to much better investment decisions. With the final O.Reg. 588/17 milestone coming up on July 1, 2025, having an AMP based on proper forecasting will be very important. I'll get into that a bit more later.

3. What is OCWA doing to support system owners?

OCWA uses a fundamentally different approach to forecasting to create our AMPs.

Our approach uses the logic that water and wastewater systems are complex and that, as a whole, they are repairable and they can be fixed. Your water treatment plant, for example, functions as an integrated system of multiple assets that work together to deliver a service (provide clean water). Some individual assets may not be repairable, but overall the system is repairable. As mentioned, we use performance rather than age or subjective condition to assess assets.

The early AMPs used the faulty logic that these complex water and wastewater systems were single, non-repairable assets. They also used age rather than performance as a measure. Remember the example of the AMP that recommended a community replace all its water pipes after 50 years? Sure, you will need to replace watermains from time-to-time, but not an entire water distribution network all at once.

At OCWA, we enter the performance of each asset in your system into the individual asset records in the OCWA software program. For every water/wastewater system that we operate, we can explicitly track dollars to assets through the program.

Using the information from the program, OCWA can produce different scenarios forecasting how well your assets will perform based on how much you invest. For example, we can produce graphs that forecast asset performance based on a \$200K spend over 10 years versus a \$500K spend. You can see in each spending scenario how well you are meeting your performance objectives: Can I supply the demands of my growing community? Can I meet the regulatory requirements for phosphorus levels? The explicit connection between cost and performance becomes obvious.



I think this is a good place to mention O.Reg. 588/17 again. By July 1, 2025, the government wants to see both the cost to maintain your community's current asset performance expectations (or service levels) and the cost to achieve your desired performance expectations. If your desired levels of service are higher, how will you pay for this? If you can't afford it, what is the risk of not getting the desired levels versus the risk of having to stay at current levels? In our approach, we generate two scenarios that show a system owner both the change in spending and the change in performance over time, to help them make an informed decision.

4. Is this approach costly?

No. When it comes to Asset Management projects, municipalities have paid a lot more for a lot less. We have streamlined our internal processes and designed our teams and systems to efficiently produce industry-leading AMPs that are always up to date. And an interesting point about our AMPs and approach is that the value grows over time, since each annual update provides better perspective on funding needs. But I'd also say it is costly not to take this approach. The age-based AMPs overestimate needs in some areas, and completely miss needs in others, bring uncertainty to spending levels and increase the risks associated with not achieving service level expectations.

Here's another point to consider: If you have a good, defensible AMP, one that uses a proper forecasting approach – you will be more confident about making spending decisions. You will also likely increase your chances of getting approval and funding for capital and major maintenance projects.

Water and wastewater systems are very complex to operate and manage. OCWA knows the systems we operate inside and out and we have experience making very complex operational decisions around why and how we spend money. We can produce AMPs with proper forecasting because we already have all the data centralized our software program, the processes set up, and a team of asset maintenance specialists available. We also keep tabs on things as they are happening and we are able to update a plan quickly, often within hours. It's natural that AMPs change continuously – it's not the sign of a bad plan. They are living documents.

If you would like to discuss your Asset Management needs, get in touch with Nick at NLarson@ocwa.com or a member of your local OCWA team. The deadline for the final O. Reg. 588/17 milestone is July 1, 2025, so there is still time to get an OCWA AMP for your water and wastewater systems.

Living our Values of Safety and Diversity

Introducing our Health & Safety STOP Program

One of [OCWA's Values](#) is Safety. Ensuring the safety, health and well-being of our employees working in communities across Ontario is an ongoing priority for OCWA.

Over the past few years, OCWA has worked hard to develop an ingrained, prevention-centric health and safety culture and to improve the Agency's health and safety management system, resulting in a continuous reduction in workplace injuries.



As part of our commitment to elevating OCWA's health, safety and wellness culture to the next level, we have introduced our new STOP program. STOP stands for:

- **Stop** and assess
- **Think** of risks & controls
- **Organize** the work
- **Proceed**

We will be implementing our new STOP program across the Agency over the coming months.

OCWA's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Blueprint

Another one of [OCWA's Values](#) is Diversity. As an organization, we embrace diverse perspectives and strive to create an equitable and inclusive environment where

each of us feels respected and empowered to achieve our personal and professional goals.

We implemented our inaugural multi-year Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Anti-Racism plan between 2019 and 2022. The strategy laid the groundwork for advancing EDI at OCWA by defining our mission and vision and setting key priorities and actions.



Following an assessment of the impact of our three-year EDI action plan, we are embarking on the next stage of our transformative journey.

OCWA is committed to evolving and advancing, and actively seeking ways to integrate EDI into our daily operations for a practical and tangible impact. Our mission is clear: to build a diverse workforce where we celebrate differences, dismantle barriers, and promote equity and accountability.

OCWA's new [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Blueprint](#) is a living document that captures our collective aspirations, commitments, and actionable strategies. It is as dynamic as the people it is designed to support and will evolve as needs, interests, and priorities shift.

OCWA OneWater® Education Program Wraps for the School Year

Refreshed Program Delivered to 2,000+ Students Across Ontario



OCWA operators were excited to be back in the classroom this past school year to deliver our refreshed OneWater Education Program.

OneWater teaches the value of water to students in grade eight by providing curriculum-connected, hands-on activities to enhance their learning. The program also offers an opportunity for OCWA to talk to young people about the rewarding career opportunities that exist in the water and wastewater industry.

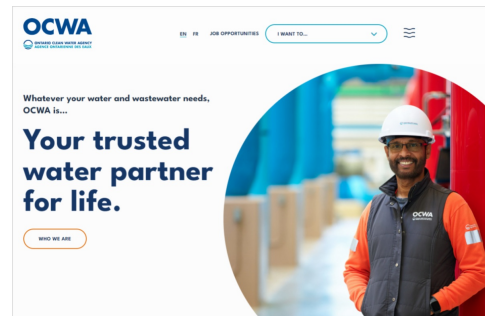
OneWater was originally launched back in 2014, and during the pandemic we took the opportunity to refresh and update the program. This past school year, our operators delivered 40 workshops to more than 2,000 students in OCWA client communities across Ontario.

We look forward to bringing OneWater to more schools in OCWA client communities in the 2024-25 school year!

Check Out Our New Website!

If you haven't visited OCWA's website in a while, you'll find a new look and experience that includes enhanced navigation and search functions.

We've also updated our [Services section](#) to fully reflect the wide range of water, wastewater and stormwater services that we offer as a total water solutions provider.



Visit ocwa.com to explore all the ways OCWA can serve your water, wastewater and stormwater needs.

Industry Conferences Round-up

Thanks to everyone who dropped by our booth at industry events over the past several months to talk water, wastewater and stormwater with the OCWA team. We look forward to continuing the conversation after a summer break! If you are headed to the IWA World Water Conference 2024 (Toronto) or the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference (Ottawa) in August, be sure to visit our booth.

Left to right: Ontario Water Works Association-Water Environment Association of Ontario (OWWA-WEAO) Joint Conference; Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) Conference.



Remembering our Colleagues Robin Kind and Jason Speers

Earlier this year, we lost two members of our executive team who were a big part of the OCWA family. We wanted to take this opportunity to remember and celebrate them.

Robin Kind, Executive Vice-President and General Counsel

Robin joined OCWA as a Senior Environmental Lawyer in 1994. She was one of a handful of employees to be with us from the early days and was integral in helping to shape what OCWA is today.

Robin was extremely proud of OCWA's people and their work. She deeply believed in supporting the well-being of communities – big and small – through providing water and wastewater services.

Robin was especially passionate about OCWA's work with First Nations communities and helped in the creation of the Agency's First Nations Advisory Circle. She also had a profound interest in OCWA's role in educating future generations and was instrumental in the creation of our OneWater® Education Program.

You can read Robin's obituary [here](#).



Jason Speers, Vice-President of Information & Information Technology

Jason was with OCWA for 12 years and was a well-liked and trusted leader. He was known for his collaborative spirit, innovative ideas and commitment to water and the environment.

Jason was keenly interested in asset management and the intersection of technology, business and operations. Holding a number of different positions at the Agency over the years, he had an open, down-to-earth approach that made him a pleasure to work with.



Jason was strongly driven by wanting to make a difference in the communities OCWA serves and, like Robin, was especially passionate about working with First Nations communities.

You can read Jason's obituary [here](#).

Robin and Jason are deeply missed. We feel privileged to have been able to work with them during their time at OCWA.



OCWA is an agency of the Province of Ontario mandated to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective clean water services to the people of Ontario.

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