



ONTARIO CLEAN WATER AGENCY
AGENCE ONTARIENNE DES EAUX

Business Plan

2025-2027

Your
TRUSTED
WATER PARTNER
For Life

Together we deliver water and wastewater services
for the health and sustainability of communities.

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1. Executive Summary

OCWA's Vision is to be "Your Trusted Water Partner for Life", which is supported by the Agency's Mission: "Together we deliver water and wastewater services for the health and sustainability of communities."

OCWA's Strategic Plan for 2024-28 reflects the Agency's Vision, Mission and Values and aims to ensure that OCWA continues to adapt its services offering and employer brand to address the changing needs of the Ontario water sector. The strategies included in the Agency's Business Plan for 2025-27 flow out of the Strategic Plan, and build on the success of the growth strategies and other initiatives that have been the Agency's focus for the past few years.

OCWA has grouped its major initiatives into five key Strategic Directions:

1. Being the Employer of Choice in the Water Industry;
2. Achieving Best-in-Class Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance Services;
3. Supporting Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship;
4. Partnering with First Nations on Sustainable Water Solutions; and
5. Ensuring Long-Term Organizational Sustainability.

Operating and Maintaining Safe, Reliable Water and Wastewater Systems for Clients

OCWA's core business is the operation and maintenance of water, wastewater, and associated facilities. On behalf of system owners, OCWA operates, maintains, and manages facilities ranging from small, rural well systems and lagoons to large-scale urban water, wastewater and stormwater systems serving millions of people.

The Agency's Operations staff, who handle the operations and maintenance (O&M) and site-specific business and capital planning requirements of hundreds of water and wastewater systems throughout Ontario, including asset management, process optimization, energy management, innovation, operational technologies, capital delivery, and project management.

OCWA operates and maintains client facilities in accordance with current federal and provincial guidelines and legislation, local statutes, regulations, and by-laws, and within the design capacity and capabilities of the individual system. All contractual and regulatory reports are prepared and submitted to clients and government bodies as required.

Being the Employer of Choice in the Water Industry

The people at OCWA are the foundation of the business. Without talent joining and staying with the organization, OCWA would not be able to deliver on its mission to work together to deliver water and wastewater services for the health and sustainability of communities. The ability to attract and retain talent improves engagement and morale, benefitting the workplace culture, and leading to a stronger workforce.

To ensure that the Agency is able to attract and retain top talent, OCWA refreshed its Employee Value Proposition and employer brand strategy in 2024. This included defining the benefits and rewards employees receive from the organization, and developing updated marketing, social media and communications strategies, which will be rolled out starting in early 2025. Another key focus for 2025 will be developing a comprehensive talent acquisition strategy for the Agency.

OCWA is committed to enhancing the employee experience, from onboarding to skills development and career progression. To better understand employee needs and areas of concern, OCWA has worked hard to ensure that as many employees as possible participate in the bi-annual Ontario Public Service (OPS) Employee Engagement Survey. The results of the survey help the Agency's leadership to understand what is important to staff and how to build a strong and healthy organization, while also identifying emerging issues and the impact of the Agency's efforts to improving the employee experience. The most recent OPS Employee Engagement Survey was held in early 2024. Agency-wide and regional action plans to address employee concerns identified in the survey were developed and will be implemented throughout 2025.

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OCWA is continuing to enhance the Agency's succession management and leadership development programs to ensure continuity across management roles. The Agency will also work to ensure that Agency managers have the knowledge and resources required to manage their work, and effectively lead their teams by developing and implementing an onboarding program for new managers.

Ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of OCWA employees continues to be an ongoing priority for OCWA. Over the past few years, OCWA has worked hard to develop an ingrained health, safety and wellness culture, and improve the Agency's health and safety management system, with a goal of continuous reduction in the number of workplace injuries and other health, safety, and wellness incidents. Through an inclusive lens, the Agency has also developed a Mental Health and Wellness Strategy to support the mental health and well-being of OCWA staff. This includes a multi-year Mental Health and Wellness Road Map, which outlines the key initiatives to be implemented in support of the Strategy.

OCWA's success is built upon having a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce that brings different experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives together to create more innovative solutions. In recognition of the importance of organizational diversity, equity and inclusion, OCWA developed and implemented a three-year Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Anti-Racism Plan. Following implementation, the Agency evaluated the success of the EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism Plan, and developed an EDI Blueprint to address outstanding gaps and other recommendations included in the evaluation report. The EDI Blueprint will guide the Agency's EDI activities for the next few years.

Achieving Best-in-Class Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance Services

OCWA's goal is to be recognized as the "best-in-class" water and wastewater service provider in Ontario, delivering consistently superior service to the Agency's municipal, First Nations, commercial and other clients. To achieve this, the Agency operates for compliance, while also working proactively to improve efficiencies and maximize the life of client assets.

OCWA's client-facing operations managers and staff provide a direct connection to the Agency's clients, managing client relationships and earning trust through the delivery of industry-leading water and wastewater services. Being "best-in-class" contributes to the health and sustainability of client communities, including public health, environmental protection, and economic development. It also ensures that clients continue to renew OCWA contracts, extend the duration and scope of those contracts, and provide word-of-mouth recommendations to other potential clients.

Operating for compliance is a critical component of delivering "best-in-class" services to Agency clients. To support this, OCWA is committed to implementing consistent and proactive operational practices; developing and employing programs to better identify and mitigate compliance risk; building, improving and sustaining process and compliance skills to ensure consistent knowledge transfer to new staff; and enhancing internal compliance reporting.

Work to identify operational best practices from across the Agency, and implement them Agency-wide, began in 2024 with the roll out of the Agency's updated Strategic Plan. This work will continue in 2025 and beyond. OCWA is also working to enhance compliance skills for new and existing staff through training, mentoring, and other skills improvement programs.

1. Executive Summary

Over the past few years, the Agency has developed a comprehensive Asset Stewardship Quality Management System, and worked hard to improve asset management practices knowledge and expertise across the Agency. To maximize the life of the water and wastewater infrastructure assets that OCWA manages on behalf of its clients, additional resources have been directed towards refining and improving maintenance management practices. This includes hiring seven new Asset Maintenance Specialists across the Agency to refine and advance asset data stewardship.

Supporting Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship

OCWA is committed to supporting climate action and promoting environmental stewardship as the operating authority for its clients' facilities. By identifying climate related risks, and advising and supporting clients with resilient infrastructure planning, sustainable resource management, and climate change mitigation opportunities, OCWA helps interested Ontario municipalities develop and promote sustainable practices to manage their water and wastewater infrastructure assets.

As an industry leader committed to demonstrating environmental stewardship, OCWA is working to establish a baseline environmental footprint for Agency-owned assets. The initial focus in 2024 was on the energy used, and emissions produced by, OCWA's fleet vehicles. OCWA will monitor this information in 2025, using the data to help assess the Agency's environmental impact, and build a culture of climate awareness within the Agency.

OCWA is also investigating how a sustainability lens can effectively be applied to procurement practices, while continuing to abide by OPS procurement policies. This work involves reviewing the environmentally sustainable policies and practices of existing vendors and considering what is feasible for OCWA.

Helping clients maintain the long-term sustainability and resiliency of their water and wastewater infrastructure is another important way in which OCWA delivers added benefit. In addition to operating and maintaining client water and wastewater facilities, OCWA delivers several value-added services that help interested clients improve decision-making, enhancing their capacity to prevent, withstand, respond or adapt to, and recover from disruptions due to climate change.

Another way in which OCWA is supporting clients is by helping them manage energy use at their facilities. Over the past few years, OCWA has worked with clients, government organizations, and other industry stakeholders to achieve the combined goals of energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction. A key focus area in 2025 will be educating clients to participate in the Energy Demand Response Program (EDRP) run by the Independent Electricity System Operator. To reduce the climate impact of participating in the EDRP, OCWA will further explore the feasibility of piloting a green energy battery storage solution (e.g., solar panels, energy battery storage, hydrogen fuel cells).

OCWA is also working with clients to mitigate future climate change impacts by increasing organics diversion and supporting the development and implementation of resource recovery facilities that use wastewater biosolids and concentrated organic waste, such as source-separated organics, to enhance and generate biogas for productive use. In addition to supporting projects that are currently underway throughout 2025, OCWA will work with interested clients to identify and implement new waste diversion and resource recovery opportunities in their communities.

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Ontario has more than 250,000 lakes, including the Great Lakes. Together, they contain almost a fifth of the world's fresh surface water. OCWA is committed to protecting those resources, working with clients, academic partners and other stakeholders. In 2023, the Provincial government announced a funding allocation of \$24 million to design, build and operate a phosphorus reduction facility in the Lake Simcoe watershed. The goal of this project is to restore Lake Simcoe and its watershed by reducing phosphorus from the Holland Marsh drainage water. At the direction of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, OCWA completed a research study in 2024 that explored feasible options to reduce phosphorus in Lake Simcoe. OCWA recognizes the importance of this project for the Lake Simcoe watershed and the community's future growth. The Agency will continue to support to the Province in 2025 and beyond, as directed, in moving forward with this project.

Partnering with First Nations on Sustainable Water Solutions

OCWA is committed to working in partnership with Ontario First Nations communities and other government organizations to support sustainable water and wastewater solutions that ensure the effective operation and maintenance of First Nations water systems. Key elements of OCWA's First Nations Strategy include building trust through advancing reconciliation, providing services that meet the needs of First Nations, and helping to build water and wastewater capacity in First Nations communities.

As part of the Agency's commitment to working in partnership with Ontario First Nations, OCWA has established a First Nations Advisory Circle, comprised of a diverse group of individuals that identify as Indigenous, representing a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and communities, to gain a greater understanding of the broader water issues facing First Nations communities from an Indigenous perspective.

Throughout 2024, OCWA worked with a third-party reconciliation expert, in consultation with the First Nations Advisory Circle and other Indigenous organizations, to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan for the Agency. The Reconciliation Action Plan assesses OCWA's current state with regard to its work with Indigenous people, identifies issues and gaps, and includes a plan to enhance the Agency's reconciliation actions. Implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan will begin in 2025.

In order to ensure that the Agency is effectively supporting Ontario First Nations, OCWA regularly gathers direct feedback from its First Nations clients regarding the individual challenges that they face in managing and maintaining their water and wastewater systems, and what could be done to better support them in resolving these issues. In addition to gathering feedback from clients, OCWA regularly seeks feedback from the First Nations Advisory Circle regarding current water issues facing First Nations communities and what should be done to address them.

OCWA is also working to build and promote water and wastewater services that respond to First Nations' needs. This includes refining and expanding existing service offerings that have been proven to be effective and valuable to First Nations, and developing additional services that address issues faced by First Nations communities. Areas of focus in the coming years include the provision of asset management and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) services, utilization of remote monitoring and electronic logs, and the provision of capital project management and emergency response services.

Helping First Nations move towards self-sufficiency with regard to managing their water and wastewater systems by providing training and capacity building services is another significant area of focus for the Agency. To achieve this goal, OCWA is developing programs and providing opportunities for First Nations Operators to develop their skills and knowledge through in-plant training, experience and mentoring. The Agency is also working to promote water industry careers to First Nations youth and other individuals.

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Ensuring Long-Term Organizational Sustainability

OCWA's long-term growth strategy continues to focus on maintaining the Agency's existing client base in Ontario, expanding the scope of services provided to these clients and attracting new clients. A core component of this strategy is the delivery of value-added services to clients that go beyond the delivery of O&M services and focus on providing "total water solutions" at every stage of the infrastructure life cycle. This includes assisting clients in managing their assets, and working with them to plan, finance and ensure the long-term sustainability of their water, wastewater, and stormwater systems.

OCWA maintains its existing client base and supports business growth by delivering quality services and developing strong community relationships, while proactively adapting the Agency's services to meet the needs of Ontario communities. The Agency's focus is on retaining current clients and increasing the delivery of additional services for those clients. In addition to retaining the Agency's existing O&M client base, OCWA is working to acquire new clients by connecting with non-client municipal Councils and senior officials, and promoting the value of OCWA's operations and maintenance and other value-added services.

2. Environmental Scan

FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT FISCAL, OPERATING & MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES 2025-27

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- ◆ The Economy
- ◆ Federal and Provincial Infrastructure Funding
- ◆ Provincial Government Priorities
- ◆ Industry Trends
- ◆ Federal and Provincial Legislation

INTERNAL FACTORS

- ◆ Workforce Issues
- ◆ Business Transformation Program

2.1 The Economy

2024 brought increased stability to the Canadian economy, as compared to prior years. The high rates of inflation experienced in 2022 and 2023, which hit a monthly peak of 8.1 percent in August of 2022, dropped steadily throughout most of 2024, falling from 2.9 percent in January to 1.6 percent in September, the most recent month for which information was available at the time this plan was prepared. The October 2024 Monetary Policy Report from the Bank of Canada attributed the decline in inflation in 2024 primarily to lower energy prices and moderation of price pressures across a broad range of goods and services.

Unemployment, as reported by Statistics Canada, grew slightly in 2024, rising from 5.7 percent in January to 6.5 percent in September, continuing an overall increasing trend from a low of 4.8 percent in July of 2022. Increasing unemployment was mostly concentrated among newcomers and youth between the ages of 15 and 24. Respondents to the Bank of Canada's Business Outlook Survey reported a corresponding increase in their ability to find suitable labour at current wages between 2022 and the third quarter of 2024, reflecting a more stable labour market for employers.

The Bank of Canada, which maintained its key interest rate at 0.25 percent from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 until January 2022, raised its key interest rate ten times between March 2022 and July 2023, bringing the rate to five percent, where it remained until April 2024. Between June and October 2024, the Bank began decreasing interest rates once again, dropping them steadily from 4.75 in June to 3.75 in October to support economic growth and keep inflation close to the middle of the one to three percent range.

In the *Monetary Policy Report*, the Bank of Canada reported modest growth in Canadian gross domestic product (GDP) of two percent for the first half of 2024, noting that growth was anticipated to drop slightly in the latter part of the year, reflecting a decline in both business investment and government spending. The Bank forecasts GDP growth of two percent for the first half of 2025, rising to 2.5 percent in the second half of the year and growing around 2.25 percent in 2026. Inflation was projected to remain around two percent throughout 2025 and 2026.

2. Environmental Scan

The Provincial government's 2024 Ontario Economic and Fiscal Review projects slower growth for Ontario in 2025 than that included in the *Monetary Policy Report*, with the Province projecting that Ontario's real GDP will grow by 1.7 percent in 2025. The Ontario government's projections are more closely in alignment with those of the Bank of Canada for 2025 and 2026, with a prediction of 2.3 percent growth in both years. Inflation is forecast at 2.1 percent in 2025, dropping to two percent in 2026 and 2027.

A number of risks to these forecasts exist, both within Canada and Ontario, and from abroad. While global supply chains have normalized from the disruptions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, high housing costs and ongoing service cost inflation continue to pose a risk to the Canadian and Ontario economies. Likewise, the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, along with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, may have significant global economic impacts over the three-year period of this plan.

All of these factors have the potential to impact the Agency's financial performance in 2025-27. Lower inflation and supply chain stabilization should have an overall positive impact, although annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustments included in existing client contracts and negotiated procurement contracts for chemicals and other major Agency purchases already offset some increases in Agency expenditures, as do clauses included in some contracts that enable these costs to be passed on directly to clients. Should interest rates continue to drop in 2025, 2026, and 2027, interest revenue earned on the Agency's cash and investments would decrease, negatively impacting the Agency's financial results. Increased labour market stability, combined with salary increases for Agency staff implemented in 2024, are anticipated to positively impact the Agency's staff attraction and retention efforts, although competition for qualified employees in the water industry remains high.

2.2 Federal and Provincial Infrastructure Funding

OCWA continues to work with clients on a fee-for-service basis to develop comprehensive water and wastewater asset management plans that prioritize their infrastructure needs for the next decade and beyond. However, many clients are challenged financially with increasing costs. This includes the cost of executing construction and capital projects, which many clients have seen grow significantly in the time between the design and the construction bidding phases in recent years. OCWA continues to monitor both federal and provincial infrastructure funding programs and other initiatives that can assist clients, and work with them to investigate and implement alternative forms of infrastructure financing and delivery as required.

The focus placed by the federal and provincial governments on addressing the housing crisis in recent years has had an impact on municipal water/wastewater infrastructure, leading to capacity challenges for treatment and linear infrastructure in many municipal jurisdictions. In November 2023, the provincial government announced its plan to build stronger, more prosperous communities by investing \$200 million over a three-year period through a new Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund to help municipalities repair, rehabilitate and expand critical drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This program, which had grown to \$970 million by 2024, will provide funding for 54 projects across 60 municipalities. The provincial government subsequently committed an additional \$250 million for a second round of applications.

2. Environmental Scan

The provincial government is also in the process of establishing the Ontario Infrastructure Bank, a new, arms-length, board-governed agency that will enable public-sector pension plans, other trusted institutional investors, and Indigenous communities to further participate in large-scale infrastructure projects across the province. The government has committed to provide \$3 billion in initial funding to the Bank to support its ability to invest in critical infrastructure projects. In addition, the Federal Canada Infrastructure Bank is still early in its program delivery with water and wastewater infrastructure. It remains unclear how funding programs from Infrastructure Ontario, the Ontario Infrastructure Bank, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank will align in relation to program delivery for Ontario municipalities.

The Canada Water Agency is a Government of Canada agency under the Minister of Environment and Climate Change portfolio. Its mandate is to improve freshwater management in Canada by providing leadership, effective collaboration federally, and improved coordination and collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous peoples to address transboundary freshwater challenges and opportunities. Headquartered in Winnipeg, the Canada Water Agency has five regional offices across Canada to ensure responsiveness to regional freshwater issues. The Canada Water Agency is currently leading the development of a National Freshwater Data Strategy in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. OCWA will support the provincial Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in working with the Canada Water Agency to protect freshwater in Ontario.

2.3 Industry Trends

There are a number of significant trends that will impact OCWA and the water industry over the next few years.

Infrastructure Planning and Investment

OCWA has a very diverse client base, including some of the largest water and wastewater systems in North America, as well as many small systems. The Agency provides expert, industry-specific guidance to clients in managing their water and wastewater infrastructure, enabling them to make informed decisions with regard to their water and wastewater infrastructure investments.

Replacing and retrofitting aging water and wastewater infrastructure is a concern for many Ontario municipalities, particularly those with smaller tax bases that may struggle to raise the funds required to make significant investments in long-term capital works. These municipalities also need to balance the investments that they make in their water and wastewater infrastructure with other municipal infrastructure priorities such as roads, bridges, and community buildings.

The Provincial government's focus on developing new housing in Ontario, in particular its target to build 1.5 million homes by 2031, has an impact on short and long-term water and wastewater planning in municipalities targeted for growth. These municipalities not only need to ensure that aging water and wastewater systems are upgraded and replaced as required, but that they also have the capacity to meet increased service demands over time.

Municipalities are further challenged to prioritize their capital projects based on their system level risk, existing equipment performance, and service expectations, while also determining how best to mitigate financial and other risks, including the impacts of climate change. Supply chain volatility, availability of equipment and supplies, and price inflation for goods and construction services have also impacted the timing and cost of capital projects in recent years.

2. Environmental Scan

While there have been significant increases in the availability of federal and provincial funding for infrastructure upgrade projects in recent years, most funding programs still require municipalities to contribute 10 to 50 percent of total project costs. Furthermore, for municipalities to be able to effectively tap into funding programs and garner optimized funding, “shovel readiness” has become a point of focus. The increased debt that some municipalities incurred responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has added additional pressure to already-stretched municipal budgets. The broader North American industry is looking at integrated project delivery approaches, such as multi-party contracts, to share financial risks and rewards, leveraging a profit and incentive pool based upon measurable project outcomes.

OCWA’s goal is to support clients by connecting them to applicable funding sources to address their long-term infrastructure needs. To access some of the funding available, municipalities will need to invest in the planning and development of projects to a “shovel ready” state that includes project definition, completion of planning and environmental assessments to outline a detailed scope, and an advanced enough design development to begin construction. To assist clients in achieving this state of project readiness, OCWA works closely with them to complete Asset Management Plans that include condition assessments, which can be employed to develop long-term capital plans. This supports planning for future water and wastewater infrastructure needs.

The provincial Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure regulation under the *Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act* (O. Reg. 588/17) requires Ontario municipalities to develop comprehensive asset management plans, which factor in the full lifecycle costs of municipal assets, for all municipal infrastructure, including water and wastewater systems, to meet the level of service expected within the community. Plans showing costs to maintain current performance vs costs to achieve desired performance for core assets (roads, bridges and culverts, water, wastewater, and stormwater management systems) were required to be in place by July 1, 2022, while plans for all municipal assets must be in place by July 1, 2025.

OCWA supports a number of its municipal clients, the majority of which are small and rural, in developing effective asset management plans that meet these provincial requirements. A key approach for the majority of these clients has been the implementation of the Agency’s Work Management System, which enables the Agency’s Operations staff to better track and manage the completion of required maintenance work. OCWA has also developed a comprehensive Asset Stewardship Quality Management Framework, and is working hard to improve asset management knowledge and expertise across the Agency. The Agency continues to support clients on a fee-for-service basis by developing comprehensive Asset Management Plans, providing capital planning and other value-added services as required, and offering these services to potential clients as part of the Agency’s long-term growth plan.

Data Management and Analytics and Cyber Security

Electronic data management and analytic tools are becoming critical necessities to develop comprehensive asset plans and manage municipal infrastructure. These “smart” systems enable municipalities to take the data generated by operational, process and asset management systems and use it to make better-informed decisions regarding their infrastructure.

OCWA is working to help clients benefit from the use of these “smart” systems by developing services that municipalities can use to optimize their investment in water and wastewater infrastructure. This includes utilizing multi-disciplinary teams to access and assess data, and provide Work Management System hosting services and associated maintenance advisory services, for municipalities that do not have the capacity to implement an electronic work management and asset maintenance system on their own.

2. Environmental Scan

Enhanced availability of process, compliance, energy, and asset maintenance information to OCWA's operational and technical experts provides lasting benefits for the Agency and its clients, including extended asset life, reduced energy and chemical use, and more strategic asset management practices, leading to better client service and long-term cost savings.

The increasingly important role played by information technology in managing municipal water and wastewater systems has led to a corresponding increase in the need to ensure the security of those operational information technology systems. Cyber security has become an issue of rising importance over the last decade, with instances of cyber-attacks and data breaches at companies and governments of all sizes and levels becoming more commonplace, and with a significant increase in digital attacks and other malicious activity noted in recent years.

OCWA utilizes third-party audits to assess and mitigate potential cyber security vulnerabilities, and has developed stringent security protocols to protect the Agency's network, data centre assets, and operational and other data. This includes testing the effectiveness of the Agency's data recovery plans for key enterprise-wide applications, and regularly updating them as required.

Exponential growth in the capabilities and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the past few years represents both an opportunity and a threat for the Agency. The increased capability and use of AI tools has the potential to significantly enhance the Agency's data analysis capacity, and ability to develop predictive models for a number of different scenarios. There is also a need to ensure that the use of these tools is effectively managed, and that potential risks, including the security of confidential client and Agency information, are addressed.

Climate Resilient Infrastructure

Managing the infrastructure impacts caused by severe weather events is another concern for many municipalities. Climate change modelling has indicated that the frequency and intensity of weather events will continue to increase in the long-term. As a result, the need for resilience in Ontario's infrastructure systems is more critical than ever.

Large rainfall events can overwhelm municipal storm water and wastewater systems, leading to flooding in residential homes, increased sewer overflows, and plant bypass events. Severe winter storms can lead to power outages that impact the operation of treatment facilities and pumping stations. Ontario's lakes and rivers will continue to experience changes to water levels, increased nutrient loading from treatment facilities bypasses, and increases in water temperature overtime, all which can negatively affect the water bodies and the plants and animals that live in them.

OCWA's Operations teams are well equipped to support clients in preparing for and responding to climate change related events. This includes implementing operational strategies to address environmental changes, and proactively developing practical contingency plans to respond to extreme weather events. OCWA works with municipal clients, who are the owners of the water and wastewater assets, to assist them in navigating the development and implementation of these climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Many OCWA clients are looking to build facilities that have redundancy of critical assets to ensure continued functionality during extreme weather events. The Agency's local Operations teams work closely with OCWA's process, energy, engineering, technology, asset management, and capital delivery specialists to better understand the specific challenges that clients are facing regarding the resilience of their infrastructure. The teams then guide clients in incorporating a climate adaptation and resiliency focus into future facility optimization and capital improvement projects.

2. Environmental Scan

The need for a greater focus on comprehensive, condition-based asset management planning, that addresses the risks associated with climate change, is of significant concern for many Ontario municipalities, particularly small and medium communities that may not have staff dedicated to full-time asset management. OCWA has developed a comprehensive asset management program, leveraging a multidisciplinary team that includes operations and maintenance staff, dedicated asset management specialists, and licensed engineers to deliver practical and efficient asset management solutions that serve client needs.

When requested, OCWA staff work with clients on a fee-for-service basis to develop detailed long-term, evidenced-based Asset Management Plans that will guide infrastructure planning and financing decisions over the life of the assets. OCWA brings a practical approach to the scenario analysis done in these Asset Management Plans [i.e., clearly presenting two plans: a baseline plan, and a second plan with an additional project that addresses climate change]. Clients can then decide if they want to move forward with the climate change project by understanding the additional investment required and the corresponding performance improvement resulting from the project.

Net-Zero and the Circular Economy

Municipalities, and the water industry as a whole, are looking for better, greener ways to manage their water and wastewater systems. This includes reducing energy consumption and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions at water and wastewater facilities, with many municipalities targeting a net-zero state, where the amount of GHGs released into the atmosphere are equal to the amount removed.

Many municipalities are looking to implement innovative energy and GHG reduction projects, along with alternative energy generation projects, to help achieve net-zero. Specific initiatives include the completion of facility process and energy reviews and technical studies, the delivery of energy management programs, the development and implementation of waste diversion and resource recovery strategies, and the development of long-term infrastructure plans. The goal of the projects under this umbrella is to close the loop on waste generated and view facilities as resources.

OCWA works with a number of interested municipalities to support their net-zero goals. Since 2014, OCWA has assisted clients in securing more than \$19 million in funding for a variety of energy savings and other retrofit projects as part of the Agency's energy management program and climate change strategy. Over 210 municipalities have accessed these services, with energy walkthroughs completed for 510 individual water and wastewater facilities. This work includes providing clients with education on energy conservation and how to operate efficiently.

Climate change impacts and potential future regulatory requirements have resulted in a shift away from traditional approaches to biosolids management, including incineration and landfills. OCWA is guiding interested clients to consider implementation of waste diversion and resource recovery projects, where feasible, to close the loop and sustainably manage biosolids storage and disposal. These initiatives create opportunities to reduce operating costs and GHG emissions from water and wastewater treatment facilities by diverting biosolids for beneficial use. Circular economy concepts explored by OCWA and Agency clients enhance biogas production, and promote innovation and clean fuels, while reducing reduce GHG emissions. These approaches also enable municipalities to achieve or improve their financial sustainability over time by generating new revenue streams and/or offsetting of energy costs.

A select number of municipalities recognize that there are significant benefits to taking the biosolids from wastewater treatment plants, along with green bin waste and other organic materials where available, and turning them from waste products into renewable energy sources. OCWA is working with interested municipalities to support the implementation of technologies that optimize overall biosolids management. Through enhanced biogas production from biosolids, a facility can aim to become net-zero in energy use by offsetting the energy used to treat wastewater. OCWA works with regulatory agencies to obtain the approvals required for execution of these projects in client communities.

2. Environmental Scan

OCWA also supports clients that are interested, and have the services in the scope of their contracts, to optimize their water and wastewater infrastructure through the Agency's Facility Optimization Program (FOP). This work reviews the ability of facilities to meet community needs through a review of the design, operation, maintenance and administrative perspective, prioritizing activities that to help defer expensive capital expansions, while supporting environmental protection and human health. OCWA has worked with nearly 25 small-to-medium size clients to optimize their facilities since the FOP was introduced in 2017.

Contaminants of Concern

Contaminants of emerging concern include pathogens, nutrients, metals, chemicals, medications, microplastics, and other things that have been, or will be, detected in wastewater effluents, for which the potential risks to public and environmental health may not be fully understood. A national expert panel report released by the Canadian Water Network in 2018, entitled *Canada's Challenges and Opportunities to Address Contaminants in Wastewater*, provides a detailed overview of the environmental and public health concerns associated with these contaminants and what can be done to address them. The report notes that contaminants of emerging concern include "a wide variety of industrial and household chemicals, plastics and pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCP), endocrine disruptors and other chemicals that were previously not recognized as a threat to public health or the environment." Most are unregulated in wastewater effluent.

Recognizing the negative impact of microplastics on the Great Lakes, where an estimated 22 million pounds (10 million kilograms) of plastic pollution ends up each year, the provincial government is supporting the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup campaign, to collect plastic waste from marinas around the province using innovative plastic-capture technology. Since the campaign began in 2020, campaign partners have filtered over 12.2 billion litres of water using a variety of cleanup technology devices, removing more than 190,000 individual pieces of debris from the Great Lakes.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are additional contaminants of concern. These are human-made "forever" compounds that persist in the environment and can now be found in wastewater and biosolids. OCWA works with municipalities and academic researchers to understand how to analyze PFAS and the degree to which their forms can be concentrated in various process streams of water and wastewater facilities, ultimately the impacting the environment and the public.

Achieving an appropriate balance between the potential risks of these contaminants and the cost of implementing treatment solutions is a challenge that researchers, water industry professionals and governments at all levels are jointly working towards answering in the years ahead. OCWA collaborates with a number of organizations, including the Canadian Water Network, the University of Waterloo, York University, Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Western Ontario, the University of Toronto, and others to investigate the and quantify the impacts of emerging contaminants on drinking water source water, wastewater discharge, and biosolids, and supporting municipal owners in minimizing their impacts.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness is another issue facing the water/wastewater industry and municipalities. A traditional area of focus with regard to emergency planning has been on the effects of severe weather events, such as flooding or drought, brought about by climate change and unanticipated infrastructure outages. However, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged municipalities and other water/wastewater operators to develop pandemic contingency plans covering a wide variety of areas, including workforce scheduling and planning, capital project execution, procurement, and ensuring the continuity of safe water/wastewater operations while protecting employee health, safety, and wellness. OCWA's Emergency Management Program includes both Corporate and facility plans to ensure emergencies are mitigated in an efficient and timely manner. The Agency's well-developed Emergency Management and Continuity

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of Operations plans were essential in helping the Agency to maintain compliant operations and minimize the impact of the pandemic on client water and wastewater facilities.

Inflation and Supply Chain Management

While things have stabilized since the pandemic, global volatility and other factors, such as the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza, and the recent election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, still have the potential to impact supply chain pricing and the availability of goods and services required to manage client water and wastewater systems. Large mergers and acquisitions in the chemical market also have the potential to increase pricing for the chemicals utilized in water and wastewater treatment processes.

OCWA has mitigation plans in place to minimize the impact that supply issues and rising costs for critical goods and services have on the Agency. In addition to continuously monitoring existing chemical/commodity suppliers, and regularly communicating with clients regarding the availability and cost of chemicals and other critical goods and services, OCWA has established an internal chemical procurement committee to address supply issues and price increases due to market turbulence. Other mitigation actions undertaken include identifying alternate supply sources as required; implementing process changes, if appropriate, when chemicals required for existing processes are in short supply; providing proactive information to Agency partners; improving contractual language about risk items; and building and maintaining relationships with vendors to ensure the continued delivery of critical goods and services.

Technology and Innovation

OCWA is a key stakeholder for the Ontario water technology sector, working with technology providers, industry associations, researchers and universities, municipal owners, and various Ministries and funding agencies to promote the development and implementation of new and innovative water technologies. As the largest operating authority in Ontario, OCWA is in a

unique position to share knowledge and conduct comprehensive pilot testing of new and innovative water and wastewater processes and technologies that address client concerns and operational needs.

Working with technology partners and other industry stakeholders, OCWA helps identify, assess, and implement new and emerging technologies that will improve the operation and infrastructure resilience of water and wastewater facilities across the province. Technology and innovative plans are piloted in OCWA-operated facilities, and the Agency's Operations teams and research partners work in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks to ensure that operational compliance of OCWA client facilities is met and maintained throughout the pilot.

Public Education and Awareness

Municipalities and other water industry stakeholders recognize the need to expand awareness of the criticality and value of public water systems and services and the importance of delivering safe, clean water to local communities. Recognizing that a better informed, more active community is an asset for water sector teams and decision makers, many municipalities and water industry stakeholders are running public awareness campaigns that highlight key themes, including:

- ◆ The importance of replacing aging infrastructure;
- ◆ Promoting behavioural changes to conserve water, and indirectly energy;
- ◆ The importance of strengthening the water sector workforce; and
- ◆ Transparency in water and wastewater quality reporting.

Other areas of focus for the water industry include dealing with “flushable” wipes and other waste materials that can clog wastewater collection pipes and treatment equipment, leading to costly repairs. Likewise, fats, oils and grease can cause significant, costly blockages in household plumbing and wastewater collection pipes.

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OCWA's education and outreach activities, including the Agency's OneWater® Education Program and I Don't Flush awareness campaign, are helping to educate the public about the value of water and how the public can play a role in protecting water and wastewater infrastructure, thereby increasing public trust in municipal water and wastewater systems.

OCWA also offers free "Water Talk" webinars, which are open to clients and prospective clients. These webinars are delivered by OCWA subject matter experts, in partnership with public and private sector partners where appropriate, and range in topics of interest, from operational issues and regulatory requirements to capital planning and environmental issues and concerns.

Staffing Shortages

Another significant industry trend is the ongoing industry-wide shortage of qualified water operators, skilled tradespeople, and other specialized skill sets. The industry has been managing, and continues to manage, the impact of an aging workforce and increasing competition for labour, with municipalities of all sizes being challenged to attract, develop, and retain high performing managers and staff. OCWA is working collaboratively with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to develop and implement strategies that address the issue on an industry-wide basis, including collaboration with provincial colleges and universities.

While staffing can be a challenge for OCWA, it also represents a potential business opportunity, as smaller municipalities that are struggling to replace retiring certified operators may decide to outsource to OCWA to ensure continuity of water and wastewater service delivery. It is also important to note that OCWA's size and geographic presence across Ontario enables the Agency to leverage talent from around the province to address temporary staffing shortages as needed and assist municipalities in need.

2.4 Federal and Provincial Legislation

As part of OCWA's commitment to provide total water and wastewater solutions to its clients, Agency staff continually review and assess the impact of new and proposed legislative, regulatory, and policy changes on OCWA and its clients, and work with them to implement changes required to meet the new requirements.

Recent and upcoming legislative/regulatory changes with an impact on the Agency are as follows:

- ◆ The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is continuing to implement their wastewater strategy to improve wastewater, and stormwater management through the issuance of standardized area-wide Consolidated Linear Infrastructure Environmental Compliance Approvals (CLI-ECAs), which are based on a similar approach to that already in place for drinking water systems under the Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program. The majority of municipal owners have submitted applications and are now operating under their new CLI-ECAs. The resulting increased reporting requirements for municipalities represents both a risk and a business opportunity for the Agency. The Ministry has also advised that they plan to reconvene a stakeholder working group to review and revise the standardized ECA template for municipal sewage treatment works, to align this template with the format and conditions within the templates for the wastewater collection CLI-ECAs.
- ◆ The municipal asset management planning regulation under the *Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2015, S.O. 2015, c. 15* requires municipalities to develop comprehensive asset management plans for all municipal infrastructure, including water and wastewater systems. With requirements having been phased in over the last several years, the final milestone of having an approved asset management plan for all municipal infrastructure assets is due by July 1, 2025. This includes the identification of proposed levels of service, what activities will be required to meet proposed levels of service, and a strategy to fund these activities.

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- ◆ The Ontario government made legislative amendments under Bill 132, the *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*, to expand the use of administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) for environmental violations under key environmental statutes, including the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*, S.O. 2002, c. 32; the *Ontario Water Resources Act*; R.S.O. 1990, c. O.40, the *Environmental Protection Act*; R.S.O. 1990, c. E.19; the *Nutrient Management Act, 2002*, S.O. 2002, c. 4; and the *Pesticides Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.11. These amendments enable AMPs to be issued by Provincial Officers for a broad range of environmental violations under the various Acts. Violations that may be subject to an AMP would be prescribed in regulation. Consultation on the proposed regulations to expand the use of administrative penalties for environmental violations was posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in 2022. No additional information regarding the proposed regulations had been released by the Ministry at the time that this plan was written.
- ◆ The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has initiated a stakeholder technical working group to develop new Ontario Procedures to supplement/clarify the American Water Works Association (AWWA) Standards for Disinfection [C652 – Disinfection of Water Storage Facilities, C653 – Disinfection of Water Treatment Plants, and C654 – Disinfection of Wells]. As with previous consultations for the Ontario Watermain Disinfection Procedure (last issued by the Ministry in 2020 to supplement AWWA C651 – Disinfection of Water Mains), OCWA has been participating in the technical working groups for these proposed new Ontario procedures. All municipal residential drinking water systems are currently required to follow these AWWA standards as set out in their Drinking Water Works Permits. The intent of the consultations is to help identify challenges inherent in the use of the current AWWA standards for Ontario drinking water systems, and to assist with the development of guidance, clarifications, or alternative disinfection methods that may be used. The Ministry has indicated that it is aiming to finalize the Ontario procedures before the end of 2024.
- ◆ Following the repeal of the 2013 *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act*, the federal government has been in consultation with First Nations and First Nations organizations regarding the development of new First Nations drinking water and wastewater legislation. If enacted, the new legislation would impact the way in which support is provided for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in First Nations communities. Bill C-61, an Act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater, and related infrastructure on First Nation lands (short title: First Nations Clean Water Act), received its second reading in the House of Commons on June 5, 2024. The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in the House of Commons for study.

Engagement by the federal government on draft updates to the standards for the design, construction, operation, maintenance, management, and monitoring of centralized drinking water systems in First Nations communities is ongoing. Initial draft updates to the protocol were shared with First Nations in 2023. Major changes included:

 - Updated treatment requirements and monitoring guidance;
 - A greater focus on risk management;
 - Emphasis on source water characterization and monitoring;
 - Updated and expanded guidance on asset management planning; and
 - Providing First Nations with the flexibility to apply Indigenous Services Canada protocols or the provincial/territorial regulations in their province.

A revised draft will be shared with First Nations for final review after feedback on the update is received.

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OCWA is also monitoring a number of proposed regulatory changes or other issues with the potential to impact the Agency and its clients in the future should they be enacted. These potential changes include:

- ◆ Updates to the Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario and Groundwater Under Direct Influence terms of reference, which could impact minimum treatment requirements for some well-based municipal residential drinking water systems.
- ◆ Potential future changes to the maximum acceptable concentrations for lead and manganese, following a Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks review of updated Health Canada guidelines.
- ◆ Proposed Health Canada Drinking Water Guidelines and Objectives for Perfluorooctanoic Acid and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate, which would set an objective of 30 ng/L for the sum of total per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) detected in drinking water. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is currently working with Health Canada and other provinces and territories on appropriate approaches for new Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines for PFAS as a group, based on treatment technology. The proposed Health Canada objective represents a precautionary group-based approach (i.e., it is based on the sum of 25 specific PFAS). The 30 ng/L objective replaces two previous drinking water guidelines and nine screening values derived for individual PFAS while these documents are undergoing reassessment in light of new scientific evidence and advancements in treatment and analytical technologies.

The potential impact of the proposed objective is unknown. Drinking water systems are not currently required to sample for PFAS under provincial or federal regulations. According to Health Canada, current data suggests PFAS levels in Canadian freshwater sources and drinking water are below the proposed objective. However, levels may be higher near facilities that use these chemicals, locations where firefighting foams were used, landfills, and wastewater treatment plants. Where monitoring data exists, it is often for a limited number of PFAS, and there is variability in the type of PFAS studied, the analytical methods used, the detection limits and the sampling frequency. As a result, it is challenging to get an accurate picture of the concentrations of PFAS in drinking water.

- ◆ New PFAS limits for commercial biosolids. In June of 2024, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced that, as of October 18, 2024, it would begin to enforce an interim standard for biosolids sold as commercial fertilizers, to ensure they contain less than 50 parts per billion (ppb) of per-fluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) as an indicator for PFAS chemicals. The new PFAS limits do not apply to sewage biosolids that are land-applied as non-agricultural source materials (NASM) under the Nutrient Management Act, or municipalities generating NASM only. While this change will not likely impact the vast majority of OCWA's municipal clients, coupled with Health Canada's objective for total PFAS in drinking water, it is another step toward regulating PFAS in the Canadian water and wastewater industry.
- ◆ The *More Homes Built Faster Act* aims to facilitate the construction of 1.5 million homes across the province by 2031. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued an updated Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024), which came into effect on October 20, 2024. The PPS 2024 aims to provide more flexibility to municipalities to help reach the Province's new home building goal. Under the PPS 2024, guidelines for planning sewage, water, and stormwater services highlight the need for accommodating forecast growth by optimizing the use of existing municipal and private communal systems. These services must be sustainable, financially viable, and protective of public health,

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the environment, and water resources, including stormwater management. Municipalities, being the primary decision-makers for local communities, must ensure that municipal official plans and planning by-laws are consistent with the PPS 2024. Increased funding opportunities to help municipalities develop, repair, rehabilitate and expand critical drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, such as Ontario's Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, may result in an increase in capital/major maintenance projects requiring OCWA support.

- The MECP is proposing to revoke the current Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) requirements and make a streamlined Environmental Assessment (EA) regulation for higher-risk municipal infrastructure projects (i.e., more complex water, sewage, and shoreline/in-water works). The proposed Municipal Project Assessment Process (MPAP) regulation is intended to speed up delivery of critical public works to support housing infrastructure for Ontario's rapidly growing population. The current four-phase MCEA process typically takes one to two years, and requires public and other stakeholder consultation throughout. Projects are categorized in "schedules", based on their complexity or potential for environmental impacts. The proposed MPAP regulation includes a new Project List that designates certain municipal infrastructure projects as streamlined EA projects under the Act, and is a proponent-driven self-assessment process that allows the assessment of potential environmental impacts to be completed within six months. Water/wastewater projects that would fall under the MPAP regulation include:

- Constructing a new water system, including a new well;
- Constructing a new water treatment plant or expanding an existing facility beyond its current rated capacity;
- Constructing a new wastewater treatment plant that processes over 50,000 litres of sewage per day; and
- Expanding lagoons beyond existing rated capacity.

New EA projects will have a strict timeline (120 days) and will need to be planned strategically (e.g., pre-consultation and seasonal studies completed prior to starting the regulatory process, and a bigger consulting team to complete all deliverables in time, leading to a bigger upfront cost for clients). Many projects that previously required a MCEA would no longer have *Environmental Assessment Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.18* requirements. For these projects, municipalities would need to determine what process to follow, if any, that suits their project and community needs. All private sector infrastructure projects would be exempt, which could lead to potential issues for OCWA when taking on facilities built by developers.

- With support from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Water Environment Association of Ontario and the Ontario Good Roads Association, a technical committee led by the CSA Group has developed a new standard for wastewater management systems. The proposed standard, CSA W217, mirrors the structure of Ontario's Drinking Water Quality Management Standard (DWQMS). While it is mandatory for municipal drinking water systems to be accredited to the DWQMS, the intent is for CSA W217 to be adopted on a voluntary basis by any organization, public or private. Once finalized, this standard can provide the basis for developing and implementing a formal risk assessment process (along with other key elements) to strengthen OCWA's Quality and Environmental Management System for wastewater systems.

In addition to monitoring new and proposed legislation/regulations, OCWA participates in Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks working groups and water and wastewater industry associations to contribute to the shaping of future regulations and stay abreast of regulatory change.

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2.5 Provincial Government Priorities

Priorities of the provincial government, as set forth in the 2024 Ontario Budget: Building a Better Ontario, include:

- ◆ Investing in new roads and highways, while supporting the largest transit expansion in North America;
- ◆ Continuing to rebuild Ontario's economy by attracting domestic and international manufacturing investments;
- ◆ Expanding the province's electricity capacity;
- ◆ Supporting innovation;
- ◆ Helping small businesses thrive; and
- ◆ Investing in workers and key public services, without raising taxes or fees.

Specific initiatives included in the 2024 budget with an impact on the Agency and its municipal clients include:

- ◆ Accelerating Ontario's Plan to Build by investing more than \$190 billion over the next 10 years to build and expand highways, transit, homes, high-speed internet, and other critical infrastructure that will support economic growth.
- ◆ Increasing funding for housing-enabling municipal infrastructure projects by investing \$1 billion in the new Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, dedicated to core infrastructure projects, and quadrupling the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund to \$825 million for municipal water infrastructure projects that would enable new housing.

OCWA is committed to supporting the province in achieving these and other priorities.

In July 2024, OCWA received its most recent mandate letter from the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The letter, which is included in Appendix B of this plan, outlines the Ministry's expectations for the Agency in 2025. OCWA is working to achieve the Agency-specific objectives included in the letter by:

- ◆ Managing the Agency's operations efficiently, effectively, and safely, with a focus on providing value to OCWA's clients and the Province by continually looking for ways to improve productivity, manage costs, enhance service delivery, and provide a safe and inclusive workplace that promotes diversity and tolerance;
- ◆ Supporting the adoption of principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning by:
 - Working with OCWA's clients to develop comprehensive, long-term asset plans for their water and wastewater systems; and
 - Working with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and other government stakeholders to examine the most appropriate ways for OCWA to support its clients in building water and wastewater infrastructure projects, consistent with the *Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993, S.O. 1993, c. 23*, and subject to approval by the Ministry;
- ◆ Increasing waste diversion by supporting the development and implementation of renewable energy centres that use wastewater and concentrated organic waste to generate biogas for productive use;
- ◆ Supporting the effective planning, development, construction and operation of municipal and other water and wastewater systems by offering clients a comprehensive range of value-added engineering and other technical and advisory services that complement the Agency's core operations and maintenance services, including project management, capital delivery, process optimization, energy management, and asset management;
- ◆ Working with the Agency's clients to optimize and upgrade their water and wastewater facilities, including providing recommendations and advice on how to increase the efficiency and capacity of their systems, reduce the cost of delivery, and maximize the life of their water and wastewater assets;

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- Working with clients to optimize, upgrade and enhance the resiliency of their water and wastewater facilities and improve their capacity to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from floods and other disruptions;
- Maintaining five specially-trained and equipped emergency response teams that are available 24 hours a day, every day, to provide emergency assistance to municipalities and First Nations communities across the province, should the need arise, and setting emergency preparedness goals that reflect the importance of the Agency's role as an emergency responder for drinking water and wastewater emergencies in Ontario;
- Helping to protect water and the Great Lakes by:
 - Working with the Agency's clients to implement process improvements and capital upgrades that help prevent phosphorus and other damaging nutrients from entering local water sources through wastewater effluent;
 - Supporting the Province in implementing the Lake Simcoe Phosphorus Reduction Project, as directed; and
 - Educating the public about the importance of water and the Great Lakes, as well as the proper disposal of medications and other harmful waste products through the Agency's two signature education and outreach programs, the 'I Don't Flush' public awareness campaign and OneWater® Education Program;
- Helping to improve drinking water for Indigenous communities by working collaboratively with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' Indigenous Drinking Water Projects Office and the Walkerton Clean Water Centre to:
 - Provide training and other support services, including remote monitoring and oversight, to assist First Nations operators in operating and maintaining the water and wastewater systems in their communities; and
 - Support efforts to remove long-term drinking water advisories in First Nations communities.

OCWA is also working to support the government's priorities for all agencies, including:

1. Maintaining competitiveness, sustainability and expenditure management by:

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies, and savings through innovative practices and/or improved program sustainability;
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario's bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives;
- Complying with realty interim measures for Agency office space; and
- Leveraging and meeting benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

2. Maintaining transparency and accountability by:

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting;
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable; and
- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the Board of Directors' role in Agency governance and accountability.
- Providing the Minister with annual skills matrices to ensure the Board has qualified appointees; and
- Reviewing and updating agency Key Performance Indicators annually to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

3. Ensuring the effective management of risk by:

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of Agency risks, including potential future emergency risks.

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4. Effectively managing the Agency's workforce by:

- Optimizing organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including redeploying resources to priority areas, where needed; and
- Supporting the implementation of the Community Jobs Initiative by identifying opportunities to relocate new or existing Agency offices to lower cost communities.
- Aligning OCWA's human resource and accommodation strategies with Ontario Public Service directives and policies;
- Adhering to Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet labour and bargaining mandates; and
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

5. Supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion by:

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace; and
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

6. Ensuring effective data collection by:

- Improving how the Agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing, and reporting, to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery; and
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario, when applicable, regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

7. Enhancing digital delivery and customer service by:

- Exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery to ensure customer service standards are met, where appropriate; and
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations.

2.6 Workforce Issues

Several internal and external factors will have an impact on the Agency's workforce in the coming years, including increased retirements, a shortage of qualified operators, a higher cost of living, a multi-generational workforce, mental health and wellness awareness, and the evolving knowledge and skills needed to meet changes in the water and wastewater industry.

There is significant competition for skilled and experienced operators, skilled tradespeople and individuals with other specialized skill sets in the water industry, with demand for new employees expected to grow over the next decade. Industry organizations such as the Water Environment Federation and ECO Canada have identified the shortage of experienced, qualified operators as an ongoing issue across North America and around the globe. Low unemployment rates in Ontario have compounded the problem, creating an extremely competitive environment for employers.

In the last number of years, the water and wastewater industry has changed significantly due to advances in technology, aging infrastructure, increased legislation, climate change and the need for conservation. As a result, the role of a water or wastewater operator continues to evolve, increasing in complexity, accountability, and knowledge of technology. In recognition of this, OCWA is continually monitoring, evaluating, and developing strategies to anticipate and respond to ongoing changes.

In 2024, two significant changes were implemented that are important to ongoing attraction, engagement, and retention. OCWA formalized its Operator Career Path program, which recognizes the efforts, dedication, and skills/experience that employees bring through their licenses. The program provides a path for Operators to move into higher classified and compensated roles after they successfully pursue and achieve higher-level licenses. The second significant event was the result of OCWA identifying positions that warranted consideration for a special wage adjustment.

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Concerns around staffing challenges and a desire to protect front-line services (where public health and safety are paramount) were the business imperatives for these changes. As a result, increased compensation for 14 front line roles was negotiated, above and beyond the across-the-board compensation increases implemented for Ontario Public Service employees following the repeal of Bill 124, which restricted compensation increases for Ontario public sector workers. Compensation rates for these 14 positions are now more closely aligned to market rates. OCWA will monitor the impact of these changes, which are expected to have a positive impact on staff attraction and retention, over time.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are ethical principles and strategic assets that foster innovation, resilience, and wellness in today's dynamic landscape. Mental health and wellness play a vital role in employee success and overall workplace satisfaction. By embracing these priorities, an organization can attract and retain top talent, increase employee engagement, and improve connection and alignment with the clients and communities it serves. Recognizing this, EDI and mental health and wellness are key priorities included in OCWA's current five-year Strategic Plan.

Both existing and new employees that the Agency is seeking to attract are looking for flexible work options, and increased support to balance work and their personal lives. In response to changing workplace expectations, OCWA has supported hybrid work arrangements where possible, and continues to improve and modernize its IT tools and platforms in order to support various types of remote work. The majority of OCWA's workforce (approximately 80%) are frontline staff and work onsite every day. OCWA continues to support a flexible work culture (in accordance with OPS policies and guidelines) by working with managers and staff to manage alternative work arrangements, accommodation, and disability management.

Having the tools and systems in place to use data analytics to drive better business decisions and understand current and future risks is also important. To help achieve this, OCWA is acquiring a new Human Resources Information System to streamline processes, break down information silos and allow for better data analytics, measuring, and reporting, with an expected go-live date in early 2025.

2.7 Business Transformation Program

OCWA has made a significant investment in upgrading its information technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) systems over the past decade, implementing innovative digital solutions that support the Agency's business, and facilitating efficient and effective service delivery for Agency clients. OCWA's Business Transformation Program (BTP) was established to oversee these investments and initiatives. The program aims to extend and enhance the Agency's IT and OT systems, and improve the Agency's business processes, ensuring that OCWA has the tools and skills necessary to deliver total solutions to its clients, both now and for years to come.

BTP is focused on making strategic investments in the services OCWA delivers, including client-facing services such as routine O&M, operational support services such as compliance standards management, and corporate business support services such as human resources management. Each service area is prioritized and addressed, based on business criticality and identified benefits, before being assessed in terms of existing processes and practices, existing hardware and software technologies that support those processes, and the skills of the staff responsible for delivering those processes. Change management needs are identified, and solutions are designed, selected, configured, and implemented, before staff are trained and benefits are measured.

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BTP represents a significant investment for the Agency, both financially and in terms of staff resources, which is why a program management office (PMO) was established to oversee the program. The PMO is responsible for keeping the program on schedule and on budget, and for providing governance and oversight of all BTP activities, including planning, change management, communication, quality assurance, integration, and the tracking of benefits and outcomes.

OCWA will continue to make investments through BTP in 2025 and beyond, expanding and improving OCWA's IT and OT systems, along with the reliability, security and mobility of the Agency's IT networks. Through BTP, the Agency is augmenting the functionality of existing systems, and assessing and integrating existing and new IT tools. The integration of IT and OT systems and solutions will lead to better capture, storage, analysis and sharing of datasets that require data from multiple sources, such as operations, maintenance, and financial data about client water systems. As each solution is implemented, it enriches OCWA's information sources, which are essential to improve efficiencies and enable the Agency's business to continue to grow sustainably.

3. Strategic Direction

3.1 Core Business Activities

Operating and Maintaining Safe, Reliable Water and Wastewater Systems for Clients

Every day, OCWA treats over a billion litres of source water to produce safe drinking water, and treats a similar quantity of wastewater before returning it safely to the environment. On behalf of system owners, OCWA operates, maintains, and manages facilities ranging from small, rural well systems and lagoons to large-scale urban water, wastewater, and stormwater systems serving millions of people. OCWA's core business is the operation and maintenance (O&M) of water, wastewater, and associated facilities. The Agency's Operations staff handle the O&M, and site-specific business and capital planning requirements of hundreds of municipal and other water and wastewater systems throughout Ontario. They are assisted by corporate resource specialists, who provide specialized support in a number of areas, including asset management, process optimization, energy management, innovation, operational technologies, capital delivery, and project management.

Working together, OCWA's water and wastewater experts:

- ◆ Maintain services in client facilities with a focus on environmental responsibility and public health;
- ◆ Comply with all licensing, certification, and permit requirements, and with any relevant legislation, while meeting all applicable government standards and reporting, and staying conversant with new regulations
- ◆ Provide appropriate insurance coverage and establish and maintain proper contingency and emergency plans;
- ◆ Provide a workplace health and safety program and a Quality and Environmental Management System (QEMS) through OCWA's compliance program;
- ◆ Deliver detailed reports that demonstrate environmental compliance, capital requirements, and future planning; and

- ◆ Manage all applicable human resources requirements for the Agency's clients, including providing appropriate training to meet regulatory requirements and ensure certified and knowledgeable operations and maintenance staff.

OCWA provides all labour, vehicles, and services required to operate, maintain, and manage client water and wastewater treatment facilities. These facilities are tended to by operational staff during the week, and can be monitored remotely 24 hours per day. OCWA staff are available 24 hours per day, seven days per week and are able to respond to emergencies at client facilities as required.

OCWA operates and maintains client facilities in accordance with current federal and provincial guidelines and legislation, local statutes, regulations and by-laws, and within the design capacity and capabilities of the individual system. All contractual and regulatory reports are prepared and submitted to clients and government bodies as required.

OCWA's QEMS ensures that client facilities are being operated in an efficient, safe, and environmentally responsible manner, and includes processes for identifying and mitigating risks that may affect the facilities OCWA operates. The QEMS empowers OCWA to take a responsible, pro-active, and effective management approach, to better protect public health and the integrity of the environment. OCWA utilizes a number of electronic tracking systems to ensure regulatory compliance, analyze performance, and better utilize operational and other resources.

Work orders for each client are stored electronically in OCWA's computerized Work Management System (WMS) and are available for review by clients. Summary reports are provided quarterly or as agreed upon between OCWA and the client. Water and wastewater system performance data, including flow data and sampling results, are recorded using OCWA's Process Data Management (PDM) software, which allows OCWA to provide clients with a standard, systematic, and reliable way of collecting, storing, and retrieving their operational data. This information

3. Strategic Direction

is also provided to clients quarterly for review and analysis. Electronic logbooks are also used to record information concerning the operation of client systems, replacing the paper logbooks traditionally used by water and wastewater operators with a more reliable and accountable system.

Maintenance services are based on leading industry best practices and OCWA's decades of O&M service delivery. Maintenance plans are developed based on best practices and servicing guidelines provided by manufacturers. Various maintenance and operational tactics ensure operation is maintained according to the design intent of the facilities. OCWA's asset protection strategy involves the assignment of preventive maintenance based on standard tasks in support of required asset service levels. The frequency and content of these tasks are reviewed and adjusted in collaboration with local operators to align with the asset's local operating context. This assists with developing a specific maintenance plan, which meets the goals of the program.

Client maintenance plans include associated asset portfolios and are updated as changes occur. Maintenance activities are recorded in OCWA's WMS, including work orders, which identify actual labour and comments required to complete work. Records of completed work in the form of completed work orders stored in the WMS reflect completed activities and include deviations or additions to planned procedures. Asset performance measures are also documented on the completed work order where applicable.

Routine maintenance consists of maintenance and care of the facility including all equipment adjustments, lubrication, repairs, calibrations, cleaning and painting to preserve the current condition, good working order, and appearance of all facilities. Checklists for assets are compiled in WMS, or newly developed using field collection if necessary. Equipment is grouped by route, building, location, or some other logical means that ensures full coverage [during operator round checks], with minimum travel.

To proactively identify and mitigate risks, OCWA's preventive maintenance program consists of regularly scheduled and follow-up maintenance activities as recommended by equipment manufacturers, or using industry best practices, including routine inspections, warranty maintenance activities and calibration. Defined maintenance plans help reduce the risk of asset failure, and ensure due diligence and sustainability of assets.

Emergency or unplanned work is more expensive than planned work. For this reason, and to ensure service reliability at each facility, OCWA strives to minimize emergency work through our routine and preventative maintenance program. However, breakdown maintenance may be required where an asset is near the end of its useful life, or if there is an unexpected repair, replacement, or renewal required.

Upon request from the client, OCWA will develop detailed and comprehensive asset management plans as an additional fee-for-service offering. These plans are developed utilizing the in-depth knowledge of local operations and maintenance teams, maintenance and operational data from the WMS system, and industry-leading philosophies. Data from all of these sources is compiled into reports that support clients in making informed decisions regarding capital expenditures and planning, ensuring the sustainability of their water and wastewater infrastructure.

3.2 OCWA's Strategies for 2025–2027

OCWA's Vision is to be "Your Trusted Water Partner for Life", which is supported by the Agency's Mission: "Together we deliver water and wastewater services for the health and sustainability of communities." OCWA's Strategic Plan for 2024-28 reflects the Agency's Vision, Mission and Values and aims to ensure that OCWA continues to adapt its services offering and employer brand to address the changing needs of the Ontario water sector. The strategies included in the Agency's Business Plan for 2025-27 flow out of the Strategic Plan, and build on the success of the growth strategies and other initiatives that have been the Agency's focus for the past few years.

3. Strategic Direction

OCWA has grouped its major initiatives into five key Strategic Directions:

1. Being the Employer of Choice in the Water Industry;
2. Achieving Best-in-Class Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance Services;
3. Supporting Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship;
4. Partnering with First Nations on Sustainable Water Solutions; and
5. Ensuring Long-Term Organizational Sustainability.

Strategic Direction 1: Being the Employer of Choice in the Water Industry

The people at OCWA are the business. They build relationships with clients, stakeholders and one another to realize OCWA's vision of being 'Your Trusted Water Partner for Life'. Employees who believe in and live OCWA's 'trusted' values contribute to an organizational culture of excellence and innovation.

OCWA's success is built on workplaces where employees have a sense of purpose, belonging, support and career potential, contributing to an organizational culture of excellence and innovation. A healthy, engaged workforce is essential to achieving OCWA's goals and objectives. This includes ensuring that employees have the support they need to develop skills and competencies in their roles and gain confidence as they grow in their careers.

OCWA believes that:

- ◆ Attracting talent and keeping good people directly correlates with the client experience and their satisfaction with the Agency;
- ◆ Engaged, knowledgeable and happy staff create trusted relationships with clients, each other and the public by providing quality water and wastewater services;
- ◆ Employees who believe in and live OCWA's 'trusted' values see OCWA as an employer for life; and

- ◆ All of these factors result in better onboarding, knowledge transfer, succession planning, communication, engagement, and social interaction.

Attract, Retain and Develop Great People

Without talent joining and staying with the organization, OCWA would not be able to deliver on its mission to work together to deliver water and wastewater services for the health and sustainability of communities. The ability to attract and retain talent improves engagement and morale, benefitting the workplace culture and leading to a stronger workforce. A stronger workforce is also more likely to live OCWA's values, reducing overall risk in many areas, including regulatory compliance, health and safety, and facility operation.

OCWA is working to develop integrated recruitment, total compensation and talent management programs that will enable the Agency to create a high-performance, sustainable organization that meets its strategic and operational goals and objectives.

Employee Value Proposition and Talent Acquisition

To ensure that the Agency is able to attract and retain top talent, OCWA refreshed its Employee Value Proposition and employer brand strategy in 2024. This included defining the benefits and rewards employees receive from the organization, and developing updated marketing, social media, and communications strategies, which will be rolled-out starting in early 2025.

Another key focus for 2025 will be developing a comprehensive talent acquisition strategy for the Agency. This involves thinking about OCWA's hiring needs from a medium and long-term perspective, instead of just focusing on recruitment, where the goal is to fill immediate vacancies. To develop the strategy, Agency staff will review current programs, assess the who, when, why, and how the Agency hires, identify gaps, and develop plans to address the gaps.

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Enhancing the Workplace Experience

OCWA has identified maintaining an engaged and motivated workforce as a key component of its overall business strategy, recognizing the strong connection between how employees experience the workplace, employee productivity, innovation, effectiveness, and efficiency, and the overall success of the organization. The Agency is committed to enhancing the employee experience from onboarding to skills development and career progression.

Key engagement goals for the Agency include:

- ◆ Making employees feel valued and accepted, and providing them with meaningful opportunities for recognition, contribution, and growth;
- ◆ Ensuring that employees feel connected to the Agency's Vision, Mission, and Values, and understand how their contributions are making an impact on the organization;
- ◆ Fostering an environment that encourages learning, achievement, and excellence; and
- ◆ Taking a different approach to building workplace resiliency and agility.

To better understand employee needs and areas of concern, OCWA has worked hard to ensure that as many employees as possible participate in the bi-annual Ontario Public Service Employee Engagement Survey. The results of the survey help the Agency's leadership to understand what is important to staff, and how to build a strong and healthy organization, while also identifying emerging issues and the impact of the Agency's efforts to improving the employee experience.

The most recent OPS Employee Engagement Survey was held in early 2024. While there was a slight decrease in the Agency's survey response rate and Inclusion Index in 2024, as compared to the previous engagement survey completed in 2022 (63 percent vs. 65 percent response rate, and a 77.4 vs. 74.5 Inclusion Index), the Agency's Engagement Index remained consistent at 69.9. There was also an increase in the Agency's Leadership Index from 64.4 to 68.3¹.

¹ The Engagement Index reflects overall employee commitment, motivation and satisfaction with their jobs and the organization; the Inclusion Index reflects employees' feeling of respect, belonging and being oneself at work; and the Leadership Index reflects how employees feel about their leaders (e.g., collaboration and accountability).

Key Agency strengths identified in the survey were: employee commitment to their jobs; satisfaction regarding independence and decision making; positive working relationships with managers; willingness of management to address discrimination, where required; and commitment to employee learning and development. Areas of concern included: workplace stress; compensation and benefits; fair hiring and promotion practices; and confidence that survey results would be addressed.

Key actions that will be undertaken in 2025 to achieve OCWA's engagement goals and address employee concerns include:

- ◆ Expanding OCWA's onboarding program to include non-Operations staff;
- ◆ Expanding learning pathways (wastewater, administrative, soft skills) for employees;
- ◆ Expanding the use of external partnerships to meet the Agency's employee learning and development objectives;
- ◆ Addressing mental health and wellness concerns; and
- ◆ Implementing the Agency-wide and regional action plans developed in response to the results of the 2024 OPS Employee Engagement Survey.

Inspirational and Effective Leaders

In recognition of the role that strong leadership plays in meeting organizational objectives, OCWA is also continuing to work to enhance the Agency's succession management and leadership development programs, to ensure continuity across management roles. OCWA's succession management process includes analyzing the potential vacancy risk for each management position in the Agency, assessing the broad impact of each position in the organization, developing, and reviewing action plans for business-critical and at-risk Agency positions, and implementing succession plans for critical positions, including learning plans. OCWA's leadership development program helps the Agency to maintain a pipeline of potential successors for critical positions, and includes two streams:

3. Strategic Direction

- ◆ An Aspiring Manager stream for high-potential employees who want to move into managerial roles; and
- ◆ An Aspiring Leader stream to prepare high-potential managers for future senior leadership roles.

OCWA will continue to support both of these programs in 2025 and beyond, working to define and promote leadership behaviours and accountability, regularly reviewing their effectiveness, and implementing enhancements as required. The Agency will also work to ensure that Agency managers have the knowledge and resources required to manage their jobs and effectively lead their teams, by developing and implementing an onboarding program for new managers.

Enhance a Proactive Health, Safety and Wellness Culture and Mindset

Ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of OCWA employees continues to be an ongoing priority for OCWA. Over the past few years, OCWA has worked hard to develop an ingrained health, safety, and wellness culture, and improve the Agency's health and safety management system, with a goal of continuous reduction in the number of workplace injuries, and other health, safety, and wellness incidents.

Through an inclusive lens, the Agency has also developed a Mental Health and Wellness Strategy to support the mental health and well-being of OCWA staff. This includes a multi-year Mental Health and Wellness Road Map, developed in 2024, which outlines the key initiatives to be implemented in support of the Strategy.

OCWA's health, safety and wellness priorities for 2025 include:

- ◆ Implementing the Mental Health and Wellness Road Map;
- ◆ Reviewing the Agency's Contractor Safety program and developing recommendations to ensure due diligence and compliance;
- ◆ Reviewing and streamlining the Agency's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claims management program;

- ◆ Promoting prevention programs, policies, and resources to staff; and
- ◆ Procuring and beginning implementation of a new Health, Safety, and Wellness IT system for the Agency.

Demonstrating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment and Accountability

OCWA's success is built on having a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce that brings different experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives together to create more innovative solutions. Diverse teams are more representative of the customers that the Agency serves. By strengthening the Agency's focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, OCWA is working to create a healthier, more respectful and representative workforce at all levels of the organization.

In recognition of the importance of organizational equity, diversity, and inclusion, OCWA developed and implemented a three-year EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism Plan. Following implementation of the EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism Plan, OCWA gathered internal employee feedback through a pulse survey and focus groups, and worked with a third-party consultant to evaluate success, and provide recommendations for future improvements. This led to the development of an EDI Blueprint, to addresses outstanding gaps and other recommendations included in the evaluation report, and guide the Agency's EDI activities for the next few years.

The EDI Blueprint has four main objectives:

- ◆ **Create Awareness, Knowledge and Advocacy** by developing tailored EDI communication and training for different audiences, such as new staff and Agency managers;
- ◆ **Create an Inclusive Workplace and Accountability** by refreshing the mandates of the Agency's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council and Young Professionals Networks, applying an EDI Lens throughout the employee life cycle, and developing opportunities for recognition through an EDI lens;

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- ◆ **Build a Diverse Workforce** by utilizing external partnerships to build a diverse talent pipeline, and leveraging the Agency's new Human Resources Information System to support fair and equitable recruitment and advancement processes; and
- ◆ **Lead the Industry** by sharing EDI initiatives with clients, industry partners and the Agency's First Nations Advisory Circle.

Throughout 2024, OCWA staff worked to complete an EDI Snapshot for the Agency, deliver "Reducing Bias in Recruitment" training, establish EDI learning goals for staff, build an EDI resource repository, and incorporate EDI into the Agency's new employee onboarding program. In 2025, OCWA will focus on leveraging the capabilities of Workday, the Agency's new Human Resources Information System, to track and analyze EDI data and trends. Additional priorities will be included in the 2025 EDI Action Plan, which will be finalized early in the new year.

Strategic Direction 2: Achieving Best-In-Class Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance Services

OCWA's goal is to be recognized as the "best-in-class" water and wastewater service provider in Ontario, delivering consistently superior service to the Agency's municipal, First Nations, commercial, and other clients. To achieve this, the Agency operates for compliance, while also working proactively to improve efficiencies and maximize the life of client assets.

OCWA's client-facing operations managers and staff provide a direct connection to the Agency's clients, managing client relationships and earning trust through the delivery of industry-leading water and wastewater services. Being "best-in-class" contributes to the health and sustainability of client communities, including public health, environmental protection, and economic development. It also ensures that clients continue to renew OCWA contracts, extend the duration and scope of those contracts, and provide word-of-mouth recommendations to other potential clients.

Operate for Compliance

Operating for compliance is a critical component of delivering "best-in-class" services to Agency clients. To support this, OCWA is committed to implementing consistent and proactive operational practices; developing and employing programs to better identify and mitigate compliance risk; building, improving and sustaining process and compliance skills to ensure consistent knowledge transfer to new staff; and enhancing internal compliance reporting.

Work to identify operational best practices from across the Agency that help minimize non-compliances and exceedances, and implement them Agency-wide, began in 2024 with the roll out of the Agency's updated Strategic Plan. This work will continue in 2025 and beyond.

Key areas of focus include:

- ◆ Improving internal compliance reporting by identifying gaps in current reporting, developing standard reports for stakeholders, and optimizing processes for populating standard reports, including utilizing information technology tools;
- ◆ Developing and implementing operational dashboards for the Agency's most common types of water and wastewater systems (e.g., lagoon systems, extended aeration plants, and water filtration systems);
- ◆ Reviewing and updating the Agency's Standard Operating Procedures for water and wastewater facilities, along with the roles and responsibilities of key Operations positions, as required, to ensure that they are up-to-date and meet the needs of the Agency and its clients.

OCWA is also working to ensure consistent knowledge transfer to new staff, and improve and sustain process and compliance skills for new and existing staff through training, mentoring, and other skills improvement programs.

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Maximize Life of Client Assets

Over the past few years, the Agency has developed a comprehensive Asset Stewardship Quality Management System, and worked hard to improve asset management practices knowledge and expertise across the Agency. To maximize the life of the water and wastewater infrastructure assets that OCWA manages on behalf of its clients, additional resources have been directed towards refining and improving maintenance management practices. This includes hiring seven new Asset Maintenance Specialists across the Agency in 2024 to refine and advance asset data stewardship.

Significant activities to be undertaken in 2025 include:

- ◆ Holding an asset management “boot camp” for the Asset Management Specialists, members of the Agency’s corporate Business and Asset Management Standards group, and other staff regularly using OCWA’s electronic Work Management System;
- ◆ Providing asset registry training to the Asset Management Specialists; and
- ◆ Utilizing the Agency’s Work Management System to ensure that all necessary preventive maintenance activities are recorded, tracked, and completed on time.

Strategic Direction 3: Supporting Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship

As the operating authority for its clients’ facilities, OCWA is committed to supporting climate action and promoting environmental stewardship. By identifying climate-related risks, and advising and supporting clients with resilient infrastructure planning, sustainable resource management, and climate change mitigation opportunities, OCWA helps Ontario municipalities develop and promote sustainable practices to manage their water and wastewater infrastructure assets. OCWA is also working to baseline its own environmental footprint for the assets that it owns, and act as stewards of Ontario’s water resources.

Reduce OCWA’s Environmental Footprint

In 2024, OCWA began working to establish baselines for the environmental footprint of Agency-owned assets and build a culture of climate awareness within the Agency, with an initial focus on the energy used and emissions produced by OCWA’s fleet vehicles. This work will continue in 2025, with a goal to deliver a baseline for OCWA’s environmental fleet greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint as part of the Agency’s overall 2024 Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting in the first quarter of the year. The Agency will also establish a Sustainability Committee to review next steps on reporting metrics, and will collect, analyze, and regularly report on fleet statistics once the appropriate parameters have been established.

OCWA is working to apply a sustainability lens into its procurement practices, while continuing to abide by Ontario Public Service procurement policies, starting with reviewing the environmentally sustainable policies and practices of existing vendors. Key activities to be undertaken in 2025 include:

- ◆ Investigating how and what other municipalities and government organizations are implementing with regard to sustainable procurement;
- ◆ Including a requirement for suppliers to include a climate change lens in their responses to posted procurement requests;
- ◆ Asking vendors for Environmental Product Declarations where possible; and
- ◆ Identifying a sustainable procurement approach for the Agency.

Improve Client Infrastructure Resilience and Environmental Footprint

Helping clients maintain the long-term sustainability and resiliency of their water and wastewater infrastructure is one of the most important ways in which OCWA delivers added benefit. In addition to operating and maintaining client water and wastewater facilities, OCWA delivers a number of value-added services that help clients reduce their individual environmental footprints, improve decision-making, and enhance their capacity to prevent, withstand, respond or adapt to, and recover from disruptions due to climate change.

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Over the past few years, OCWA has worked with clients, government organizations, and other industry stakeholders to achieve the combined goals of energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction. The Agency has prepared multiple conservation, demand management, and municipal energy plans that define key energy strategies for interested municipal clients, and developed the first ever director-approved energy efficiency awareness training targeted to Operations staff.

Primary areas of focus in 2025 will be working with clients to participate in the Energy Demand Response Program (EDRP) run by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), and piloting a green energy battery storage solution. The ERDP aims to reduce overall energy usage in the Province during periods of high demand by timing required testing of facility back-up power generators to take place during those peak demand periods (as determined by IESO). This has the benefit of relieving stress on the energy grid during times of high demand, and reducing the Province's need to purchase energy from other jurisdictions to meet overall demand. OCWA will also explore opportunities to pilot green energy battery storage solutions (solar panels, energy battery storage, hydrogen fuel cells, etc.), that would reduce dependence on the use of diesel-powered generators when emergency back-up power is required.

OCWA is also working with clients to mitigate future climate change impacts by increasing organics diversion and the development and implementation of resource recovery facilities that use wastewater biosolids and concentrated organic waste, such as source-separated organics, to enhance and generate biogas for productive use. This process is referred to in the industry as “co-digestion.” These initiatives are leading the way in the province and will serve as a model for other municipalities across Ontario and Canada, many of which have untapped potential to produce biogas, reduce energy costs and significantly reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to supporting waste diversion and resource recovery projects that are currently underway throughout 2025, OCWA will work with interested clients to identify and implement new project opportunities in their communities.

Provide Stewardship of Ontario Water Resources

Ontario has more than 250,000 lakes, including the Great Lakes. Together, they contain almost a fifth of the world's fresh surface water. OCWA is committed to protecting those resources by working with clients, academic partners and other stakeholders, including local Conservation Authorities, to:

- ◆ Study, quantify, and reduce impacts of water and wastewater treatment facilities on watersheds;
- ◆ Identify and address the environmental and health impacts of contaminants such as phosphorous on water bodies; and
- ◆ Support research initiatives that promote water resources stewardship and innovation.

In 2023, the Provincial government announced a funding allocation of \$24 million to design, build and operate a phosphorus reduction project in the Holland Marsh, located in the Lake Simcoe watershed, with a goal to protect and restore Lake Simcoe and its watershed by reducing phosphorus from the Holland Marsh drainage water.

In support of this project, and at the direction of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks, OCWA prepared a research study in 2024, the scope of which included:

- ◆ Options for conceptual designs (i.e., engineered wetland, lagoon treatment, mechanical treatment) capable of treating drainage discharged from the Holland Marsh;
- ◆ An assessment of the feasibility of phosphorus recovery and reuse from the project;
- ◆ Preparing and comparing order of magnitude cost estimates (i.e., capital, operations and maintenance) for the conceptual design options;
- ◆ Project site selection criteria for each of the design options and existing sites that meet these criteria;
- ◆ Design and site considerations based on Holland Marsh drainage operations and agricultural activity; and
- ◆ Cost recovery mechanisms for the project's capital and operating costs, including analysis of benefiting parties.

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OCWA recognizes the importance of this project for the Lake Simcoe watershed, and the community's significant future growth. The Agency will provide continued support to the Province in 2025 and beyond, as directed, in moving forward with the Lake Simcoe Phosphorus Reduction Project.

Strategic Direction 4: Partnering with First Nations on Sustainable Water Solutions

OCWA is committed to working in partnership with First Nations communities and other government organizations to support sustainable water and wastewater solutions that ensure the effective operation and maintenance of First Nations water systems. Key elements of OCWA's First Nations Strategy include building trust through advancing reconciliation, providing services that meet the needs of First Nations, and helping to build water and wastewater capacity in First Nations communities.

As part of the Agency's commitment to working in partnership with Ontario First Nations, OCWA has established a First Nations Advisory Circle, comprised of a diverse group of individuals that identify as Indigenous, representing a variety of backgrounds, experiences and communities, to gain a greater understanding of the broader water issues facing First Nations communities from an Indigenous perspective.

The First Nations Advisory Circle reports to OCWA's Board of Directors through the Board's First Nations Committee and meets at least four times annually. The goal of the Advisory Circle is to advise the Agency on the integration of First Nation perspectives into the Agency's strategies, and to provide OCWA with a better understanding of the challenges that First Nations face, not only with respect to addressing water and wastewater treatment in their communities, but also in the context of their unique experiences, culture and history in Canada.

Build Trust through Advancing Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a significant commitment, which must be approached in a thoughtful, respectful, and meaningful way, through collaboration with Indigenous people. Throughout 2024, OCWA worked with a third-party reconciliation expert, in consultation with the First Nations Advisory Circle and other Indigenous organizations, to develop

a Reconciliation Action Plan for the Agency. The Reconciliation Action Plan assesses OCWA's current state with regard to its work with Indigenous people, identifies issues and gaps, and includes a plan to enhance the Agency's reconciliation actions.

As part of the Reconciliation Action Plan, OCWA is working to build Indigenous knowledge across the Agency. This includes developing and delivering Indigenous knowledge training (e.g., history, culture, spiritual beliefs, and Truth and Reconciliation) to Agency management, staff, and other stakeholders, including the Agency's Board of Directors. Implementation of other elements of the Reconciliation Action Plan will begin in 2025.

Provide Services that Meet First Nations' Needs

In order to ensure that the Agency is effectively supporting Ontario First Nations, OCWA regularly gathers direct feedback from its First Nations clients on the individual challenges that they face in managing and maintaining their water and wastewater systems and what could be done to better support them in resolving these issues. In addition to gathering feedback from clients, OCWA regularly seeks feedback from the First Nations Advisory Circle regarding current water issues facing First Nations communities and what should be done to address them.

OCWA's engagement strategy with First Nations clients includes conducting in-person surveys specific to each client community, identifying organizations that have relationships with First Nations communities (e.g., the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation), and connecting with them to discuss First Nations' needs.

OCWA is also working to build and promote water and wastewater services that respond to First Nations' needs. This includes refining and expanding existing service offerings that have been proven to be effective and valuable to First Nations, and developing or adapting services that address issues faced by First Nations communities. Areas of focus in the coming years include the provision of asset management and SCADA services, utilization of remote monitoring and electronic logs, and the provision of capital project management and emergency response services.

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Support First Nations Communities with Building Water and Wastewater Capacity

Helping First Nations move towards self-sufficiency with regard to managing their water and wastewater systems by providing training and capacity building services is another significant area of focus for the Agency. To achieve this goal, OCWA is developing programs and providing opportunities for First Nations Operators to develop their skills and knowledge through in-plant training, experience, and mentoring. The Agency is also working to promote water industry careers to First Nations youth and other individuals, including: offering scholarships targeted towards Indigenous recipients and attending community events and educational fairs. OCWA will continue to provide support to First Nations Operators through these and other initiatives throughout 2025.

Strategic Direction 5: Ensuring Long-Term Organizational Sustainability

OCWA's long-term growth strategy continues to focus on maintaining the Agency's existing client base in Ontario, expanding the scope of services provided to these clients, and attracting new clients. A core component of this strategy is the delivery of value-added services to clients that go beyond the delivery of O&M services, and focus on providing "total water solutions" at every stage of the infrastructure life cycle. This includes assisting clients in managing their assets, and working with them to plan, finance, and ensure the long-term sustainability of their systems. Supporting this is an investment in the information technology tools and systems that enable Agency staff to make informed decisions, drive performance, and deliver total solutions to clients. OCWA is confident that by focusing on and meeting client needs, the Agency can not only maintain its existing business and expand its client base over time, but significantly increase its value to the public as well.

Being a Total Solution Provider

Maintaining and expanding the Agency's base of core O&M service clients is an essential component of OCWA's long-term strategy for growth and sustainability. Over the past few years, OCWA has successfully retained more than 97 percent of clients whose contracts have come up for renewal. This includes the Agency's four largest clients: the Region of Peel; the Region of Waterloo; the Lake Huron and Elgin Water Supply Systems; and the City of Kawartha Lakes, all of which renegotiated contracts ranging in duration from 10 to 20 years.

OCWA maintains its existing client base, and supports business growth, by delivering quality services and developing strong community relationships, while proactively adapting the Agency's services to meet the needs of Ontario communities. OCWA is committed to continually strengthening its core operations and maintenance, and operational support services to provide best in class service to existing and new clients, as well as focusing on "sustainable" growth – which means sustaining the business while continuing to support current and future clients and others in need. This is achieved by:

- ◆ Building and maintaining strong relationships between OCWA and client decision makers at all levels (Mayors, municipal Councils, Chief Administrative Officers, Public Works officials, etc.);
- ◆ Demonstrating value to existing clients and providing excellent performance reporting, particularly to decision makers;
- ◆ Regularly connecting with non-client municipal Councils and senior officials, including newly elected municipal officials and Chief Administrative Officers, introducing them to the Agency and informing them of the benefits of having OCWA as their O&M service provider;
- ◆ Soliciting regular feedback from clients through client satisfaction surveys and the Agency's Client Advisory Board, which is comprised of 12 to 15 Chief Administrative Officers from OCWA client communities;

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- ◆ Promoting the value of OCWA's operations and maintenance and other value-added services in supporting the water and wastewater needs of Ontario communities, including participating in and presenting at industry conferences;
- ◆ Communicating about new services and operational innovations through "Water Talks", conferences and regular client meetings;
- ◆ Educating clients about funding and financing alternatives and supporting them in pursuing funding opportunities;
- ◆ Recommending innovative solutions that support plant operations and save money, including grant applications;
- ◆ Supporting local community activities; and
- ◆ Developing and disseminating marketing materials that focus on OCWA as a total solutions provider and show the value of OCWA.

From 2025-27, OCWA is targeting a renewal rate of 97 percent or higher, based on both number of clients and annual revenue, with a goal to extend contract terms and expand the scope of services provided where possible. The Agency's focus is on increasing the delivery of wastewater collection, water distribution, and stormwater services, along with the delivery of asset management and infrastructure services. In addition to retaining the Agency's existing O&M client base, acquiring new O&M clients is critical if the Agency is to achieve its revenue and net income targets for 2025 and beyond.

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3.3 Key Performance Indicators

The following table outlines the high-level strategic goals and key performance indicators, including performance indicators for the Agency's core business activities, that were identified as part of the Agency's strategic planning process.

Strategic Goal	Key Performance Indicators
Operating and maintaining safe, reliable water, wastewater, and stormwater systems for clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 2 or fewer OCWA-operated water systems receive inspection ratings below 90% ◆ More than 75% of OCWA-operated water systems receive 100% inspection ratings ◆ 5 or fewer OCWA-operated wastewater systems receive inspection reports with more than 5 non-compliance items ◆ Adverse Water Quality Incidents (AWQIs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20 or fewer disinfection AWQIs ▪ 10 or fewer filter effectiveness (turbidity) AWQIs ◆ Boil Water Advisories (BWAs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 or fewer BWAs resulting from disinfection or microbiological AWQIs ◆ 3 or fewer wastewater facilities with less than 90% compliance for effluent limits ◆ 30 or fewer bypassing events due to reasons other than hydraulic load (equipment issues, power outages, etc.)
Enhanced financial performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$377.7 million in annual revenue by 2027
Engaged, motivated and safe staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Maintain or improve the Agency's employee engagement index rating and inclusion index rating ◆ Year-over-year reduction in voluntary turnover rates ◆ Maintain or reduce the Agency's recordable and lost time incident rates
Improved client satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Client retention rate of 97% or greater (by revenue and by number of clients)

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3.4 2025 Initiatives and Performance Measures

The following table outlines the key strategies and goals as well as performance measures for the upcoming year.

Strategic Goal	Performance Measure(s)
Strategic Direction 1: Being the Employer of Choice in the Water Industry	
Attracting, Retaining, and Developing Great People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Year-over-year reduction in the Agency’s turnover rate, with a target of 10% or below for 2025 ◆ Employee Engagement Index increased from 69.9 in 2024 to 72 in 2026 [based on the results of the Ontario Public Service Employee Engagement Survey]
Enhancing a Proactive Health, Safety, and Wellness Culture and Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Maintain or reduce the Agency’s Recordable Incident Rate, with a target for 2025 of 1.38 or lower ◆ Maintain or reduce the Agency’s Lost Time Injury Rate, with a target for 2025 of 0.36 or lower
Demonstrating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Inclusion Index increased from 74.5 in 2024 to 77 in 2026 [based on the results of the Ontario Public Service Employee Engagement Survey]
Strategic Direction 2: Achieving Best-In-Class Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance Services	
Operating for Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ See operational key performance indicators for 2025 included in Section 3.3
Maximizing Life of Client Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Year-over-year increase in the percentage of O&M work orders that include work logs and labour, with targets for 2025 of 90% including work logs and 85% including labour ◆ Year-over-year increase in the total percentage of O&M work orders that are marked as completed, with a target for 2025 of 85%

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Strategic Goal	Performance Measure(s)
Strategic Direction 3: Supporting Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship	
Reducing OCWA's Environmental Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Establish a baseline for the greenhouse gas emissions footprint of the Agency's fleet in 2025 ◆ Establish a Sustainability Committee in 2025 to review next steps on reporting metrics and set targets for improved environmental footprint
Improving Client Infrastructure Resilience and Environmental Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Petawawa Net Zero project diverting 7,000 tonnes of organics once implementation is complete and the renewable energy system is operational ◆ Support 30% design completion for the Timmins Net Zero Project by the end of 2025 ◆ 5 or more feasibility/pilot studies or project support for organics diversion and resource recovery initiatives conducted that result in 2 or more renewable energy generation project implementations by the end of 2026 ◆ Work collaboratively with municipalities in the province to source and secure \$1.5 million or more in resilient infrastructure funding per year to advance infrastructure and state of good repair projects
Providing Stewardship of Ontario Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Support the Province in implementing the Lake Simcoe Phosphorus Reduction Project, as directed by the Minister
Strategic Direction 4: Partnering with First Nations on Sustainable Water Solutions	
Building Trust through Advancing Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Year-over-year increase in the percentage of Agency staff that have completed Indigenous awareness training, with a target of 10% of staff completing the training each year ◆ Year-over-year increase in the percentage of Agency leaders (Executive Management Team and Senior Leadership Team) and Board members who have completed Indigenous awareness training, with a target of 20% of leaders completing the training each year

3. Strategic Direction

Strategic Goal	Performance Measure(s)
Providing Services that Meet First Nations' Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Increase the number of First Nations clients requesting OCWA's services per year, with a target of 3 or more new clients for 2025◆ Increase the number of new projects or services provided to existing First Nations clients in 2025
Supporting First Nations Communities with Building Water and Wastewater Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Provide hands-on practical experience and support to 5 or more First Nation operators per year
Strategic Direction 5: Ensuring Long-Term Organizational Sustainability	
Being a Total Solution Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Retain 97 percent of O&M client contracts up for renewal in 2025 (by revenue and by total number of clients)

4. Risk Assessment and Management

OCWA has a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) program that complies with Ontario Public Service (OPS) risk management requirements, including the OPS ERM Framework and Directive. OCWA's ERM Policy and Framework, which are approved annually by the Agency's Board of Directors, outline how the Agency carries out risk management activities, including risk identification and assessment, development of risk responses and risk action plans, monitoring of risks and reporting on the results of the risk management process.

ERM is a process designed to identify potential events that may affect the Agency and manage risks to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of strategic and business plan objectives. The Agency's Board and Executive Management Team (EMT) ensure that there is a robust ERM process in place in order to make risk-informed decisions, considering the appropriate level of risk, at all levels in the organization. Risks are identified and confirmed during the normal course of business, catalogued in the Agency's Risk Register and regularly assessed and monitored. Updates on the status of risk action plans are provided to EMT and the Board on a quarterly basis.

OCWA undertakes a comprehensive risk identification and assessment process on an annual basis in alignment with the strategic planning process. Risks are assessed in terms of their potential likelihood of occurring and their potential impact on the achievement of OCWA's objectives should they occur. In assessing impact, the Agency has established a broad range of risk categories that are aligned with many of the categories identified in the Guide to the Risk Based Approach to Provincial Agency Oversight developed by Treasury Board Secretariat's Agency Governance Unit. Agency risks are broken down into six categories:

- ◆ **Human Capital, Health and Safety** - Risk of loss resulting from inadequate or failed human performance or health, safety and environmental incidents;
- ◆ **Financial** - Risk of loss resulting from poor performance or mismanagement of financial assets, or inadequate finance-related processes;

- ◆ **Technology** - Risk of loss resulting from inadequate technology, systems and processes;
- ◆ **Operational** - Risk of loss resulting from inadequate or failed infrastructure or processes;
- ◆ **Strategic** - Risk arising from the organization's inability to develop and implement appropriate business plans and strategies and make effective decisions regarding resource allocation; risks may also arise from the organization's inability to adapt to changes in the operating environment; and
- ◆ **External** - Risks arising from external and environmental factors that can negatively impact ongoing operations.

OCWA also analyzes the interconnection between risks in order to focus on mitigating risks with many interdependencies. By taking mitigating actions to reduce the likelihood of these risks, other risks are also mitigated. The results of the annual risk identification and assessment are reported to the Board's Compliance and Operational Risk Management Committee and the Board, with a focus on the Agency's higher-priority risk areas. These higher-priority risks are determined based on EMT's and the Risk Management Program Office's judgment, with a focus on the following:

- ◆ Higher rated risks that impact multiple strategic objectives;
- ◆ Higher rated risks which are pervasive across the Agency impacting multiple business units;
- ◆ Higher rated risks with the potential to be individually significant to OCWA overall;
- ◆ Risks with risk scores that deviate significantly from the identified target range; and
- ◆ Any risks with a high impact score, even if the probability is low (e.g., a drinking water incident).

4. Risk Assessment and Management

OCWA undertook an external review of its ERM program in 2022 to assess the effectiveness of the Agency's current ERM processes, and identify opportunities for improvement, most of which were implemented throughout 2023 and 2024. Key enhancements included refining the Agency's ERM Policy and Framework, strengthening the Agency's risk identification process, defining Agency risk appetite and tolerance levels, and expanding risk training and awareness activities. Additional improvements, including implementing a software solution to better track and manage Agency risks, are ongoing.

5. Business Plan Communication

Communication of key business plan initiatives will be managed as follows:

Strategic Initiative	Target Audience	Key Activities
Strategic Direction 1: Being the Employer of Choice in the Water Industry		
<p>Attracting, Retaining, and Developing Great People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OCWA managers and staff ◆ Potential employees ◆ Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Human Resources to work with Communications to promote OCWA's refreshed Employee Value Proposition and implement the employer brand strategy developed in 2024. ◆ Human Resources to work with managers to communicate the goals of the Agency-wide and regional action plans developed in response to the results of the 2024 OPS Employee Engagement Survey to Agency staff, and provide progress updates on their implementation. ◆ Human Resources to work with managers to help ensure smooth and consistent orientation and onboarding processes for new employees. ◆ Agency managers to meet with their staff to discuss potential career paths and learning opportunities. ◆ Human Resources to connect with secondary and post-secondary institutions to enhance OCWA's co-op education program, and build awareness of the water sector and OCWA for young job seekers. ◆ Human Resources to work with the Executive Management Team and Agency managers to identify and assess potential successors for key Agency positions, and identify future candidates for the Agency's Aspiring Manager and Aspiring Leader development programs. ◆ Human Resources to connect with and provide guidance to staff enrolled in the Aspiring Manager and Aspiring Leader development programs. ◆ Human Resources and managers to communicate with employees about engagement initiatives and action plans through a variety of avenues, including e-mail messages, Weekly Flows (the Agency's staff newsletter), and individual staff meetings.

5. Business Plan Communication

Strategic Initiative	Target Audience	Key Activities
Enhance a Proactive Health, Safety and Wellness Culture and Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OCWA managers and staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Corporate Health, Safety and Wellness group to work with the Safety, Process and Compliance Managers and other Regional Hub and Corporate staff to communicate with and train employees on the requirements of the Agency’s health and safety management system and engage them in making health, safety and wellness an integral part of their daily activities. Information will be provided through in-person meetings, e-mail messages and other communication channels. ◆ Corporate Health, Safety, and Wellness group to work with the Safety, Process, and Compliance Managers and other Regional Hub and Corporate staff to communicate the goals of the Agency’s Mental Health and Wellness Strategy, and multi-year Mental Health and Wellness Road Map to staff.
Demonstrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commitment and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OCWA managers and staff ◆ Potential employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Human Resources to work with managers to communicate the goals of and progress on implementing the Agency’s 2025 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan. ◆ Human Resources to include weekly communication on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives in Weekly Flows, the Agency’s electronic staff newsletter, including providing updates on upcoming days of significance for various cultural, religious, and other groups.

Strategic Direction 2: Achieving Best-In-Class Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance Services

Operate for Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OCWA managers and staff ◆ Clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Safety, Process, and Compliance Managers and Process and Compliance Technicians to communicate with the Corporate Compliance group and Operations teams regarding the Agency’s compliance performance, Standard Operating Procedures, operational best practices, and opportunities for improvement.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Operations and Business Development to communicate with clients regarding the development and implementation of enhanced compliance reports. ◆ Operations and Training groups to work together to ensure consistent knowledge transfer to new staff through training, mentoring, and other skills improvement programs.

5. Business Plan Communication

Strategic Initiative	Target Audience	Key Activities
Maximizing Life of Client Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCWA managers and staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business and Asset Management Standards group to communicate with Operations management and staff, including the new Asset Management Specialists, regarding the Agency’s Asset Stewardship Quality Management System and the implementation of improved maintenance management best practices across the Agency.

Strategic Direction 3: Supporting Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship

Reducing OCWA’s Environmental Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCWA managers and staff Vendors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change organization to be secured to provide training on sustainability and the impact of climate change to Agency staff. OCWA Sustainability Committee to be established with representation from across OCWA to solicit feedback and recommend opportunities to reduce OCWA’s environmental footprint. Procurement staff to explore environmentally sustainable policies and practices with vendors, municipalities, ministries, and other government partners and agencies.
Improving Client Infrastructure Resilience and Environmental Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Hub Managers, Operations Mangers, Corporate Technical Services Managers, and Business Development Managers to meet regularly with clients and potential clients (including virtually) to discuss how OCWA can help them manage their water and wastewater systems, including planning for, financing and implementing capital improvements and other programs and initiatives that will increase the efficiency of their systems, divert waste from landfill, reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and extend the life of their water and wastewater infrastructure.

5. Business Plan Communication

Strategic Initiative	Target Audience	Key Activities
<p>Providing Stewardship of Ontario Water Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clients ◆ Academic partners ◆ Other stakeholders [e.g. local Conservation Authorities] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Innovation and Infrastructure Solutions and Operations managers and staff to support research initiatives that promote water resources stewardship and innovation. ◆ Operations, Innovation and Infrastructure Solutions, and Business Development to support client community initiatives promoting water resources protection, resource recovery and sustainability.

Strategic Direction 4: Partnering with First Nations on Sustainable Water Solutions

<p>Build Trust through Advancing Reconciliation</p> <p>Providing Services that Meet First Nations' Needs</p> <p>Supporting First Nations Communities with Building Water and Wastewater Capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ First Nations communities and larger Tribal Councils representing regional areas ◆ First Nations Advisory Circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Operations and Business Development managers and staff to gather direct feedback from First Nations clients and the Agency's First Nations Advisory Circle on the individual challenges that First Nations face in managing and maintaining their water and wastewater systems, and what they think OCWA could do better to support them in resolving these issues. ◆ Operations and Business Development to continue to foster relationships with First Nations community decision makers through First Nations sector associations such as the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association, and the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association. ◆ OCWA to participate in and provide support for First Nations Conferences such as the Chiefs of Ontario and the Mining Ready Summit. ◆ Operations and Business Development to coordinate initiatives with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' Indigenous Drinking Water Projects Office and the Walkerton Clean Water Centre, as appropriate.
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5. Business Plan Communication

Strategic Initiative	Target Audience	Key Activities
Strategic Direction 5: Ensuring Long-Term Organizational Sustainability		
Being a Total Solution Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clients ◆ Potential clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OCWA staff to attend and present at industry conferences, publish articles in industry publications and promote OCWA services through other marketing and communication channels such as Waterline, the Agency's client newsletter, and virtual "Water Talks" on various areas of interest to clients and prospects. ◆ Regional Hub Managers, Operations Mangers, Corporate Technical Services Managers, and Business Development Managers to meet regularly with clients and potential clients (including virtually) to discuss how OCWA can help them manage their water and wastewater systems, including planning for, financing and implementing capital improvements and other programs and initiatives that will increase the efficiency of their systems, divert waste from landfill, reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and extend the life of their water and wastewater infrastructure.

5. Business Plan Communication

Aligning Services to Plan Goals

OCWA's Senior Leaders will align their service area's business unit activities to reflect the strategies in the Agency's approved business plan and budget. New initiatives will be introduced by submitting a detailed business case and seeking approval of the Agency's Executive Management Team (EMT) and, if necessary, the Board of Directors.

Monitoring Progress

The Agency uses a performance measurement system to ensure OCWA's projects and processes are consistent with the Agency's strategic direction and that senior managers are kept informed of Agency-wide progress on identified strategic initiatives. EMT and the Board monitor progress using a quarterly report, which includes plan priorities and the current status of performance measures, along with discussion on specific issues and accomplishments.

Performance Measurement

As part of OCWA's commitment to improved reporting at all levels within the organization, the Agency will continue to report on additional business critical performance indicators beyond the stated goals of this plan. The Agency will work to continuously improve upon the measures being monitored through regular consultation with EMT, SLT and the Board of Directors.

Submission of the Business Plan

Following its review and approval by OCWA's Board of Directors, the Business Plan is submitted to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks for approval. A public version of the plan is made available on OCWA's internet site, within 30 days, once approval has been received from the Minister.

A draft version of the Business Plan is provided to staff at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for review and comment prior to submission to the Agency's Board of Directors for approval, as per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive.

Internal Communication of the Business Plan

Information on the Agency's Strategic Plan and 2025-27 Business Plan initiatives will be communicated to OCWA management throughout 2025. In addition, "A Message from the President and CEO", a regular electronic bulletin from the President's Office, will be used to introduce key strategic initiatives and performance measures, and highlight the Agency's progress towards meeting those measures throughout the year.

5. Business Plan Communication

Business Plan and Annual Report Communication Timelines

The following are dates related to the communication of OCWA's Business Plan and Annual Report.

Item	Timing
2025-27 Business Plan approved by OCWA's Board of Directors and submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks	December 2024
2025-27 Business Plan posted publicly	Q1, 2025 (following approval by the Minister)
Information on Strategic Plan and Business Plan initiatives provided to OCWA management	Throughout 2025
<i>Message from the President and CEO</i> – E-mail communication to staff outlining key business goals and financial targets and progress towards achieving them	Monthly/ Quarterly (as required)
2024 Annual Report submission to Board of Directors	Q2, 2025
Q1, 2025, Quarterly Progress Report to EMT and Board of Directors	Q2, 2025
2024 Annual Report posted publicly	Q2/Q3, 2025 (once approved by the Minister and tabled in the Legislature)
Q2, 2025, Quarterly Progress Report to EMT and Board of Directors	Q3, 2025
Q3, 2025, Quarterly Progress Report to EMT and Board of Directors	Q4, 2025
Q4, 2025, Quarterly Progress Report to EMT and Board of Directors (included as part of the 2025 Annual Report)	Q2, 2026

6. Appendix A - OCWA: An Overview

OCWA is an agency of the Province of Ontario that provides a full range of water and wastewater services to Ontario clients. The Agency's core business is the operation and maintenance (O&M) of water and wastewater treatment facilities and their associated distribution and collection systems on behalf of municipalities, First Nation communities, institutions, and private sector companies. Complementing the Agency's O&M expertise, OCWA provides a comprehensive range of engineering and other technical and advisory services to water and wastewater system owners.

OCWA operates more municipal water and wastewater facilities in Ontario than any other operating authority, ranging in size from small wells and pumping stations to large-scale urban water and wastewater systems. OCWA currently operates more than 1,000 water and wastewater treatment facilities and associated systems, serving over 35 percent of Ontario with water/wastewater services, predominantly under contract with municipal clients. In addition, the Agency provides technical and advisory services to a number of other non-O&M clients.

6.1 Mandate

OCWA is a board-governed Operational Enterprise agency established under the *Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993* [CIPA] with a mandate to provide water, wastewater and other related services to clients in a manner that protects human health and the environment and encourages the conservation of water resources. Those services include financing, planning, developing, building and operating water and wastewater facilities and their associated distribution and collection systems. OCWA's roles, powers, and responsibilities are specified in a Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, which was updated in 2012 and reaffirmed by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Chair of OCWA's Board of Directors in 2015, 2018, 2019 and 2021. OCWA conducts its business in accordance with various Ontario Public Service policies and directives as set out in the MOU.

6.2 Vision and Mission

OCWA's Vision and Mission

OCWA's Vision is to be "Your Trusted Water Partner for Life", which is supported by the Agency's Mission: "Together we deliver water and wastewater services for the health and sustainability of communities."

OCWA's Values

OCWA's values are focused on building trust with clients and other stakeholders:

Everything we do is guided by our belief in and commitment to:

Teamwork – We bring together our local knowledge, skills and talents and collaborate with our partners to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Reliability – We provide essential services that meet or go beyond compliance standards and follow through on our commitments to each other and our partners.

Understanding – We listen to and collaborate with our partners to deliver solutions that meet their needs.

Safety – We make health, safety and wellness in our workplace and in the communities where we live and work, our number one priority.

Transparency – We communicate openly, honestly and authentically with each other and our partners.

Environment – We protect the environment through innovative solutions to strengthen the health and sustainability of the communities we serve.

Diversity – 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.

6.3 Governance

OCWA is committed to implementing governance best practices at all levels of the organization to enhance transparency and accountability to clients, the government and the citizens of Ontario.

The Agency is governed by a Board of Directors (the “Board”). Members of OCWA’s Board are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the Premier. The Board follows best practices in corporate governance, including director orientation and ongoing education, holding regular meetings and strategic planning sessions, as well as adhering to the Agency’s Board Code of Conduct.

A Board competency matrix has been established to ensure that the skills of Board members are in alignment with the long-term business strategy of the Agency. OCWA’s Board is comprised of individuals with a range of competencies and backgrounds, enabling the Board as a whole to effectively fulfill its stewardship responsibilities. Collectively, the Board has expertise in both the private and public sector, as well as in managing municipal corporations and utilities.

The Board is responsible for overall Agency affairs, including setting strategic direction, monitoring performance and ensuring appropriate systems and controls are in place for the proper administration of the Agency in accordance with OCWA’s governing documents. The Board is accountable to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, who is accountable to the Provincial Legislature.

OCWA’s Board has established a number of standing committees to assist it in fulfilling its corporate governance and oversight responsibilities. Current committees include the Audit and Finance Committee; Business Transformation and Technology Committee; Compliance and Operational Risk Management Committee; First Nations Committee and Human Resources, Governance and Nominating Committee. Temporary task forces may also be established as necessary by the Board to provide guidance to management and oversee specific Agency initiatives.

6.4 Accountability

OCWA demonstrates accountability to the government and citizens of Ontario in a number of ways, including:

- ◆ Meeting the priorities outlined in the annual Letter of Direction from the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks;
- ◆ Meeting the requirements of appropriate regulatory authorities (Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Ministry of Labour, Medical Officer of Health, etc.) for OCWA-operated facilities;
- ◆ Providing facility reports to clients for OCWA-operated municipal water treatment facilities;
- ◆ Generating an Annual Report, submitted for approval to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, for tabling in the Provincial Legislature and made available to all Ontarians online at www.ocwa.com;
- ◆ Producing an annual three-year Business Plan, including performance measures, submitted for approval to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks annually and made available to all Ontarians online at www.ocwa.com;
- ◆ Supporting annual audits of OCWA’s financial statements and periodic Value for Money Audits conducted by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario;
- ◆ Providing accessibility to Agency records under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*;
- ◆ Complying with applicable legislation and Ontario Public Service policies and directives; and
- ◆ Utilizing an Enterprise Risk Management program to identify and assess business and operational risks.

6.5 OCWA's Operations and Activities

In addition to O&M, which is the Agency's core business, OCWA offers clients a broad array of related functions, including engineering, training and other technical and advisory services such as process optimization, energy management and asset management. OCWA's goal is to assist its municipal, First Nation and other clients in managing their water and wastewater facilities and associated distribution and collection systems at every stage of the asset lifecycle and to help them ensure the sustainability of their water and wastewater systems. In everything that the Agency does, OCWA is steadfastly committed to implementing innovative technologies, processes and solutions aimed at improving operational efficiency and reliability.

OCWA utilizes a shared service structure whereby staff and resources are shared among large municipal plants and smaller satellite facilities to ensure geographic optimization. OCWA's typical hub structure provides economies of scale that lessen operation and maintenance costs for individual municipalities. Clients also benefit from the sharing of management, administration and specialized support services.

The majority of Agency employees are directly involved in developing, selling and delivering customer solutions and are among the most knowledgeable and experienced in the water and wastewater industry. Some staff have been providing operational services to OCWA's municipal clients since before the Agency was established in 1993, having worked for our predecessor organizations, the Utility Operations Division at the Ministry of the Environment and the Ontario Water Resources Commission, which was established in 1956 to oversee the province's water resources.

OCWA has an unmatched ability to deliver excellent compliance and safety performance across diverse regions, technologies and facility sizes. OCWA staff treat water and wastewater for municipalities with populations as large as 1.4 million in the Region of Peel or smaller than the 2,400 in Moose Factory. OCWA also proudly includes many First Nations clients in its operations portfolio.

Given OCWA's role as a public Agency, the protection of public health and safety is the Agency's top priority. OCWA's specially-equipped and highly-trained emergency response teams are available to respond within 24 hours to water or wastewater emergencies throughout Ontario, providing an essential resource to the province. With locations across Ontario, OCWA staff are always nearby, ready and able to provide emergency resources should the need arise.

OCWA supports the Province of Ontario in safeguarding drinking water for the people of Ontario and protecting the province's lakes and rivers by providing training services for water operators on behalf of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre and delivering training directly to wastewater operators across the province. Education is another way in which OCWA brings value beyond the services that it delivers directly to clients. OCWA's school and community outreach programs educate the public about the value of water and the importance of protecting the environment.

Across Canada and around the world, a combination of aging infrastructure and tight municipal budgets are forcing water utilities to find ways to do more with less. OCWA is helping to ensure that the Agency's clients make well-informed decisions regarding infrastructure investments by working with them to develop comprehensive water and wastewater asset plans that prioritize their infrastructure needs for the next decade and beyond. OCWA also helps clients to access federal and provincial funding opportunities that will allow them to put those plans into action.

Municipalities, and the water industry as a whole, are looking for better, more sustainable ways to manage water and wastewater systems. OCWA works with clients to enhance the resilience of their infrastructure, reduce energy use, and reduce the production of harmful greenhouse gases through best management practices and technology, including turning biosolids from wastewater treatment plants, along with food and other organics, from waste products into potential energy sources.

6. Appendix A – OCWA: An Overview

OCWA is also innovating in the area of information management by working to develop and implement integrated information technology systems to automate collection, analysis and communication of water and wastewater facility information from internet-connected sites. The Agency's goal is to ensure that operational staff and clients have ready access to up-to-date information for all of the facilities that the Agency operates.

OCWA's success with these initiatives will ensure that the Agency continues to provide the highest level of service to clients while helping the province to protect the health of Ontario residents and conserve and sustain Ontario's water resources for present and future generations.

7. Appendix B - 2025 Letter of Direction

**Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks**

Office of the Minister
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2J3
Tel.: 416 314-6790

**Ministère de l'Environnement,
de la Protection de la nature et des
Parcs**

Bureau du ministre
777, rue Bay, 5^e étage
Toronto ON M7A 2J3
Tél. : 416 314-6790



357-2024-1353

July 5, 2024

Ms. Deborah Korolnek, Chair
Ontario Clean Water Agency
Email: debbie.korolnek@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Korolnek:

I am pleased to share our government's 2025 priorities for the Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA).

As Chair, you play a vital role in the achievement of OCWA's mandate. Proper alignment of OCWA's goals, objectives and strategic direction with government priorities and direction enhance relationships, while building upon prior successes. In tandem, government and agencies act in the best interests of Ontarians, demonstrate value for taxpayers and operate within the parameters of government policies and directives.

Per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, this letter sets out my expectations for the OCWA for 2025. These priorities include:

Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies and savings through innovative practices and/or improved program sustainability.
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario's bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives.
- Complying with realty interim measures for agency office space.
- Leveraging and meeting benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

Transparency and Accountability

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices and responding to audit findings, where applicable.

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7. Appendix B - 2025 Letter of Direction

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- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability and providing the minister with annual skills matrices to ensure the board has qualified appointees.
- Reviewing and updating agency Key Performance Indicators annually to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

Risk Management

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment and mitigation of agency risks, including cyber security and any future emergency risks.

Workforce/Labour Management

- Optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including redeploying resources to priority areas, where needed.
- Supporting the implementation of the Community Jobs Initiative by identifying opportunities to relocate new or existing agencies to lower cost communities across Ontario (as per MBC Realty Directive, s. 5.4), as applicable.
- Aligning Human Resource and Accommodations strategies with OPS directives and policy.
- Adhering to TB/MBC labour and bargaining mandates.
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

Diversity and Inclusion

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

Data Collection, Sharing and Use

- Improving how the OCWA uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

Digital Delivery and Customer Service

- Where appropriate, exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery to ensure customer service standards are met.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations.

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These are the government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority.

In addition to these government-wide priorities, subject first to OCWA's stated objects, in conjunction with its full and unconditional compliance with all applicable legislation, (including, but not limited to the *Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993*, S.O. 1993, c. 23) and subject secondly to OCWA's MOU with the minister, OCWA's mandate for the year 2025 will consider the following goals:

- Managing OCWA's operations efficiently, effectively and safely, with a focus on providing value to OCWA's clients and the province by continually looking for ways to improve productivity, manage costs, enhance service delivery and provide a safe and inclusive workplace that promotes diversity and tolerance.
- Supporting the adoption of principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning by:
 - Working with OCWA's clients to develop comprehensive, long-term asset plans for their water and wastewater systems;
 - Working with the ministry and other government stakeholders to examine the most appropriate way for OCWA to support their clients in building water and wastewater infrastructure projects, consistent with CIPA and subject to approval by the ministry; and
 - Increasing waste diversion by supporting the development and implementation of renewable energy centres that use wastewater and concentrated organic waste to generate biogas for productive use.
- Supporting the effective planning, development, building and operation of municipal and other water and wastewater systems through the provision of a comprehensive range of engineering and other technical and advisory services to water and wastewater system owners. This would include providing recommendations and advice on how to increase the efficiency and capacity of their systems, reduce the cost of delivery and maximize the life of their water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Enhancing municipal infrastructure resiliency, including supporting energy-savings and energy from waste programs and programs focused on flood management, and working with the OCWA's clients to optimize and upgrade their water and wastewater facilities.
- Providing emergency response support to the province by ensuring that the OCWA's emergency response teams are ready and able to provide emergency assistance within 24 hours, should the need arise, and setting emergency preparedness goals that reflect the importance of the OCWA's role as an emergency responder for drinking water and wastewater emergencies in Ontario.

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- Helping to protect water and the Great Lakes by:
 - Working with clients to prevent phosphorus and other damaging nutrients from entering local water sources through the effluent that is released from their wastewater treatment facilities; and
 - Educating the public, through education and awareness programs, about the importance of water and the Great Lakes, as well as the proper disposal of medications and other contaminants.

- Helping to improve drinking water for Ontario's First Nations communities by working collaboratively with the ministry's Indigenous Drinking Water Projects Office as well as the Walkerton Clean Water Centre to:
 - Provide training and operational support services, including remote monitoring and oversight, to support First Nations in the operation and maintenance of water and wastewater systems within their communities; and
 - Support efforts to eliminate long-term drinking water advisories in First Nation communities.

I would be pleased to discuss these priorities during our next meeting, and I look forward to hearing how they will be reflected in the OCWA's upcoming business plan and in ongoing agency operations.

Thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to the OCWA. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to me and the people of Ontario.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lee Hawke, Manager, Program Delivery Unit at lee.hawke@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,



Andrea Khanjin
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Enclosure

c: Serge Imbrogno, Deputy Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Iman Hashemi, President and CEO, Ontario Clean Water Agency
Lee Hawke, Manager, Program Delivery Unit, MECP

8. Appendix C– Human Resources Plan

8.1 Staffing Overview

As of September 2024, OCWA had 1076 full time employees. Staff information provided below includes:

	Regular	Fixed Term Contract	Total
Full-time	990	86	1076

Employee Gender Distribution

Group	Male	Female	Unspecified	Total
Management	104	55	1	160
Non-Management	621	256	39	916
Total	725	311	40	1076

8.2 Key Human Resources Priorities

8.2.1 Attracting and Retaining Great People

Strategic priorities around people and culture are designed to support the changing needs and expectations of OCWA's employees, support transformation of Agency services, and significantly improve the ways in which the needs of OCWA's clients and other stakeholders are met. OCWA recognizes that people are the ones who make the Agency successful and how important it is to invest in them, both now and for the future.

Attracting great people to the water industry and to OCWA, as an employer of choice, is a priority for the Agency. OCWA recognizes that in a world of talent shortages, employees want more value out of their jobs. In 2024, OCWA worked on defining the Agency's Employee Value Proposition to get a better understanding of the unique value OCWA offers as an employer to current and prospective employees. This plays a key role in attracting, engaging, and retaining top talent, and elevating OCWA's employer brand. Enhancing the Agency's employer brand strategy, and implementing initiatives to increase awareness of careers in the water and wastewater industry, and at OCWA specifically, will be a key priority in 2025. In addition, OCWA is developing a proactive talent acquisition strategy, with a focus on being able to predict and prepare for current and future hiring needs.

As new employees join the Agency, it is important that OCWA's onboarding program be streamlined to support new employees. OCWA has developed a new onboarding program focused on new operations and trades employees, and will work to expand the onboarding program to all new employees and managers. OCWA's Learning and Development team have developed various learning paths to assist staff to increase their levels of certification or improve their administrative and soft skills.

Compensation survey data enables OCWA to compare its salaries against industry benchmarks and make strategic decisions regarding compensation and classification initiatives. In 2022, the Ontario Superior Court ruled that Bill 124, which imposed a three-year cap on salary increases for Ontario provincial public sector employees, was unconstitutional. Following the court ruling, in early 2024, the provincial government negotiated retroactive salary increases for employees represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO) in the Ontario Public Service. Similar salary adjustments were also made for management and other bargaining agents. In addition to these across-the-board increases, OCWA was successful in increasing compensation for operator and trades positions across 14 different job classifications to meet the 50th percentile of market comparators, effective January 1, 2024.

Strong efforts are being made to increase engagement and commitment across all levels of the organization. The Agency's most recent employee engagement survey results show OCWA's key strengths to be co-worker relationships, job fit, clear expectations and direction, and commitment to public service. The results also indicate there is more that can be done when it comes to showing employees that they are valued and supported, keeping lines of communication open, and promoting fair and consistent hiring practices. In an effort to improve the Agency's performance in each of these areas, OCWA worked with managers and staff to develop action plans that have a meaningful impact at the local level.

Building leadership strength across management roles is a priority for the Executive Management Team. In an effort to build leadership strength, the Agency implemented a Leadership Development program to meet the needs of two different streams: Aspiring Managers and Aspiring Leaders. OCWA will continue to identify and develop successors for management and risk-critical positions on an annual basis.

8. Appendix C – Human Resources Plan

8.2.2. Enhancing a Proactive Health, Safety and Wellness Mindset

A healthy, safe and engaged workforce is essential to achieving organizational goals and objectives. Ensuring the health, safety and well-being of OCWA employees continues to be an ongoing priority for the Agency. Over the past few years, OCWA has worked hard to develop an ingrained, prevention-centric health, safety, and wellness culture, and improve the Agency's health, safety, and wellness program, with a focus on reducing the number of workplace injuries over time.

Proactive planning and a prevention mindset have enabled the Agency to maintain safe work environments, and meet or exceed most of the Agency's annual health, safety, and wellness targets. Key initiatives include OCWA's "Don't Walk By" program, which aims to recognize and correct unsafe conditions before an incident occurs. The Don't Walk By program has shown strong growth since its introduction in 2021. In 2024, OCWA introduced the STOP program, which promotes taking time to Stop, Think, Organize, and then Proceed with planned work.

The next step OCWA is taking to enhance its health, safety and wellness programs is to develop a sustainable long-term approach to mental health and wellness. To-date, OCWA has made good progress increasing mental health and wellness communication and learning opportunities, and providing employees with better access to available resources. OCWA's enhanced mental health and wellness program will be informed through external research and internal feedback from an employee pulse survey and focus groups.

8.2.3. Demonstrating, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment and Accountability

As a leader in the water industry, OCWA recognizes that the Agency's success is built on having a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accepting workforce that brings different experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives together. By identifying and acting on gaps in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) objectives, OCWA aims to create more innovative and allied solutions that meet the needs of employees and clients.

In recognition of the importance of organizational equity, diversity, and inclusion, OCWA developed its first multi-year EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism plan, which was implemented over the course of three years. In 2023, OCWA evaluated the success of its EDI Strategy, conducting an environmental scan, as well as gathering internal feedback through an employee pulse survey and focus groups. The Agency's renewed vision is to foster an employee experience rooted in equity, diversity, and inclusion, and cultivate a culture where employees feel safe, valued, and are able to achieve their full potential. An updated EDI Blueprint was shared with Agency staff early in 2024. The EDI Blueprint includes an updated mission statement, foundational elements, and annual action plan to track and measure progress.

8.2.4. Labour Relations

OCWA takes a proactive approach to building and maintaining positive working relationships with its four unions (Ontario Public Service Employees Union [OPSEU], Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario [AMAPCEO], Professional Engineers Government of Ontario [PEGO] and Association of Law Officers of the Crown [ALOC]). The Unions are included as business partners and efforts are made to continue to grow relationships strategically through quarterly committee meetings and engagement in local initiatives.

The Agency's Employee Relations Committees work to achieve common goals through open communication by sharing information, discussing issues and resolving areas of conflict. The Agency's goal is to continue to improve employee relations, promote best practices in employment and resolve workplace disputes through the delivery of high quality, fair and consistent services. To accomplish this, the Agency continues to focus on maintaining a respectful relationship with the unions, fostering positive labour relations within each of its workplaces, identifying common interests, meeting on a regular basis and creating win-win solutions.

9. Appendix D – Information Technology Plan

In recent years, OCWA has made significant investments in upgrading the Agency's information technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) systems. These investments allow OCWA to continue to build and expand its computing network, increase system availability, and improve accessibility and accuracy of data and information, while ensuring the security of the environment.

This includes:

- ◆ Implementing OCWA's Digital Strategy, which includes the Internet-of-Things, leveraging artificial intelligence and modelling to optimize plant operations, and implementing hybrid cloud and on-premise solutions to provide 99.97 percent system availability to ensure business continuity.
- ◆ Upgrading and enhancing the Agency's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system with data capture sensors, power monitoring and process data.
- ◆ Implementing a sophisticated SCADA system, which allows staff to gather real-time process data; making the data available for Operations staff or for reporting through the Agency's Process Data Management (PDM) system, which is used to store and analyze key operations and compliance data; and implementing standard reporting features in PDM, so that users spend less time preparing client reports, while ensuring redundancy and high availability of systems.
- ◆ Implementing an upgraded Work Management System (WMS), which enables OCWA to track and manage operators' work and manage and maintain clients' assets, providing operators with access to the information required to support increasingly complex maintenance and asset management activities, while also providing clients with more direct information about their assets and the performance of their facilities. This system allows the Agency to reduce maintenance costs and minimize risks such as unplanned equipment failure for clients, while helping to analyze asset performance, recommend rehabilitation and renewal investments and make sure client assets are sustainable.

- ◆ Building a secondary data centre co-location site to expand IT services and application redundancy of all of OCWA's data centre sites in order to further improve resiliency of client-hosted solutions and improve recovery of business-critical operational systems in less than 24 hours following a service interruption.
- ◆ Continuous strengthening of OCWA's cyber security posture to ensure resiliency, protect, detect, and respond to advanced malware threats, and increase staff cyber security awareness.
- ◆ Developing a data management strategy, enterprise architecture model, and integration of data and applications, streamlining processes, and enhancing data integrity.

These process and technology improvements provide a platform from which further enhancements can be made. The next stage in OCWA's technology evolution, which is currently underway, is the implementation of the Agency's Business Transformation Program (BTP). BTP is focused on making strategic investments in OCWA's business practices, IT systems, and staff training and development to sustain and grow the Agency's business. Recognizing that significant time and resources will be required to implement all of the objectives of the program, BTP is being implemented using a phased approach, with solutions areas being prioritized to align with the Agency's strategic priorities and critical business needs.

Accomplishments to date through BTP include:

- ◆ A completed Enterprise Business Architecture that shows the significant stakeholders that interact with OCWA and a service model that expresses the values delivered to clients and the internal services need to support them. The architecture will be used as a framework to link various parts of the Agency, relating and aligning information and technology with the business functions that it supports.
- ◆ Upgrading the Agency's existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and implementing a new cloud-based budgeting solution, which supports the majority of the Agency's financial activities.

9. Appendix D – Information Technology Plan

- ◆ Developing a comprehensive Asset Stewardship Quality Management System (ASQMS) framework, improving asset management skills of all OCWA employees through asset management training, and building a culture of asset stewardship across the Agency.
- ◆ Rolling-out a mobile (handheld) application to OCWA operational staff that allows for the operation and maintenance of water and wastewater systems regardless of where the operator is physically located. Through the handhelds, operators can pull data from a number of systems, including WMS and the SCADA historian, “in-the-field”, rather than just in the control room, improving their ability to make fast, informed decisions.
- ◆ Implementing a cloud-based laboratory data collection reporting (LRDC) system that reduces data entry errors associated with lab sample data and reduces IT resource effort to resolve these errors by 50 percent. The LRDC system has been rolled out to OCWA’s laboratory partners across the province.
- ◆ Operationalizing the Agency’s primary data centre and disaster recovery sites.
- ◆ Implementing a PDM improvement and sustainment solution that upgrades and enhances the Agency’s current PDM system, improving response times, enabling more efficient use, and providing updated and improved support for regulatory and client reporting requirements.
- ◆ Implementing an alarm feature in PDM which sends alerts to specific users, so that action can be taken in response to potential compliance issues.

In addition to the initiatives included as part of BTP, OCWA has undertaken a number of initiatives to continuously improve the Agency’s IT and OT systems and processes, including:

- ◆ Continuing to strengthen OCWA’s cyber security capabilities by implementing the next evolution of cyber security tools to proactively defend the Agency’s network, hardware and protection of client data;
- ◆ Implementing a disaster recovery site to ensure business continuity of critical systems and applications;
- ◆ Partnering with York University on machine learning projects using SCADA data to create predictive models;
- ◆ Expanding the Agency’s computing capabilities to integrate with cloud-hosted solutions;
- ◆ Implementing a cloud-based collaboration solution that allows OCWA staff to share documents and collaborate in real time from any location;
- ◆ Implementing a tiered storage strategy to further protect OCWA’s critical data and reduce storage costs;
- ◆ Increasing operator productivity and information access through the use of handheld devices, including resolution of system issues, process improvements and training; and
- ◆ Working with vendor partners to continually enhance the Agency’s operational systems.

10. Appendix E – Communications Strategy

OCWA's communications strategy is focused on connecting with the Agency's various audiences in meaningful and memorable ways. OCWA's client-focused strategies and change initiatives, like the Agency's new Vision, Mission and Values and updated Strategic Plan, create the need to communicate about important information with several Agency audiences on an ongoing basis. The Agency also communicates directly with the public about caring for their water systems and the environment through its OneWater® Education Program and 'I Don't Flush' public awareness campaign.

OCWA's Audiences

OCWA has identified six key audience groups towards whom the Agency's communications efforts are targeted:

- ◆ **Current clients**, who will continue to generate OCWA's revenue base, and who need to see strategic and operational value in the services they receive so they extend their contracts, add new services and act as OCWA champions;
- ◆ **Prospective clients**, who are often learning about OCWA and its capabilities for the first time;
- ◆ **Employees**, who fulfill an important role as OCWA's first point of contact with clients and potential influencers;
- ◆ **Potential Employees**, who are considering joining Team OCWA, either from Colleges/Universities or as second-career, new Canadians, etc.;
- ◆ **Partners**, who are considering working collaboratively with OCWA; and
- ◆ **The Public**, who are being exposed to the work of OCWA in the community through public awareness and educational campaigns.

Key Messages

Key messages were developed to convey important information about OCWA to stakeholders. OCWA's key messages include, but are not limited to the following:

- ◆ OCWA is a trusted partner operating more than 1,000 water and wastewater facilities – more than any other operator in Canada.
- ◆ OCWA is an Operational Enterprise Crown Agency, reporting to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.
- ◆ OCWA is a “Total Water Solutions Provider,” delivering a wide range of water and wastewater services including facilities operation, maintenance and management, conveyance, asset management, energy management and process optimization.
- ◆ OCWA plays a key role in maintaining clients' water infrastructure, managing more than \$15 billion in water and wastewater assets on behalf of our clients.
- ◆ OCWA is Ontario's clean water expert, delivering clean safe drinking water to 1 in 3 people across the province and ensuring that the more than 1.1 billion litres of wastewater that the Agency treats and returns to Ontario's lakes and rivers daily meet the highest environmental standards.
- ◆ OCWA is helping to protect the Great Lakes by optimizing nutrient removal in Agency-operated wastewater facilities and educating the public about the proper disposal of medications and other wastewater system contaminants.
- ◆ OCWA helps to ensure that First Nation communities in Ontario have clean drinking water through the new First Nations Regional Hub, as well as throughout the Agency, by providing training and support to the operators responsible for managing community water systems, along with direct O&M services where requested.

10. Appendix E – Communications Strategy

- OCWA is helping to reduce the impacts of climate change by working with clients to ensure that their water and wastewater facilities are climate ready and limiting the production of greenhouse gases by reducing power consumption in the water and wastewater facilities that we operate.
- OCWA supports the development and implementation of new water technology by working in partnership with municipal clients and technology companies to foster innovative solutions and pilot new products and services.
- OCWA is client-focused and has the proven ability to thrive within a competitive market.
- OCWA's Operations teams have excellent compliance records.
- OCWA cares about the health of the communities it serves and about the environment.
- OCWA employees are engaged with their communities, taking part in events and helping to promote water literacy through educational programs and awareness campaigns across the province
- With locations across Ontario, OCWA is nearby, ready and able to provide emergency resources should the need arise.

Key Initiatives for 2025

In 2025, OCWA will focus on the following communications initiatives:

- Continuing to roll-out the Agency's new Vision, Mission and Values company-wide. The refresh emphasizes OCWA's commitment to the people who rely on the Agency and ensures OCWA staff continue to feel connected to the Agency. The refreshed Vision, Mission and Values reflect the commitments that OCWA staff make to each other and to the people they serve – not just in the language they use, but also in how they live them every day.
- Continuing to create and update promotional marketing and communication materials to focus on OCWA as a Total Water Solutions Provider and publicizing the Agency's Vision statement: "Your Trusted Water Partner for Life". This includes materials highlighting OCWA's wide range of value-added services.
- Continuing OCWA's "Water Talks", an online webinar series featuring Agency and industry experts that targets clients, prospective clients and water/wastewater industry professionals.
- Increasing OCWA's profile by submitting papers and presenting at industry conferences and tradeshows.
- Continued roll out of OCWA's refreshed OneWater® Education Program, adding more partner schools and piloting a new OneWater® supplemental piece for grade 10 students that highlights the science curriculum and careers in the water/wastewater industry.
- Continuing delivery of the "I Don't Flush" public awareness campaign on social media, focusing on the overall message that "your toilet and drains are not garbage cans."

10. Appendix E – Communications Strategy

Internal Communication

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, OCWA will use its current communication tools (intranet, e-mail, and social media) to regularly highlight key information for staff throughout the organization and keep them aware of corporate direction and priorities.

Key communications vehicles and activities include:

Initiative/Activity	Purpose	Timing
Health and Safety and Wellness Updates/ Safety Bulletins	Increase health and safety awareness	Ongoing
Staff Newsletter – “Weekly Flows”	Highlight key agency activities, initiatives and news from the field	Weekly
Board Operational Compliance Dashboard	Update the Board on key performance indicators	Quarterly
Business Plan Quarterly Report	Update EMT and the Board on business plan performance measures	Quarterly
Message from the President and CEO	Electronic bulletins from the President’s Office to communicate key events and information	As needed
Town Halls	Update all-staff (virtually) on Agency initiatives and provide a forum for asking questions.	As needed

10. Appendix E – Communications Strategy

External Communication

OCWA will use its external newsletter, publications, website and social media to sell OCWA's value proposition to clients and prospects. These tools will be used to provide information on water and wastewater industry trends, new OCWA products and services, OCWA campaigns and educational initiatives.

Initiative/Activity	Purpose	Timing
E-newsletter (Waterline)	Inform clients and potential clients of industry trends and OCWA expertise	Quarterly
Website (ocwa.com)	Keeping clients, potential clients and the public up to date on OCWA service offerings and activities, as well as contact information	Ongoing
Brochures	Highlight OCWA's new product offerings and inform potential clients	Ongoing
Videos	Educate clients, client communities and prospective clients about OCWA's service offerings, the water/wastewater treatment process, and the value of water	Ongoing
Career/Recruitment Materials	Attract new employees to OCWA through social media campaigns and other avenues	Ongoing
Business Plan and Annual Report	Provide a comprehensive account of OCWA's planned and completed accomplishments and activities for the year, including financial targets and results and key performance measures	Annually
Community Outreach (Water Festivals, School Presentations, Community Support/Events)	Provide community support and educational presentations regarding the water life cycle, monitoring and conservation, and protection of water infrastructure and the natural environment by properly disposing of non-flushables	Ongoing
Sponsorships	Sponsor local events in the communities in which OCWA operates	Ongoing
Tradeshows/Conferences	Provide an industry presence at water tradeshows (either online or in-person) to demonstrate OCWA's capabilities and service offerings. Gather industry information, and present at conferences	Ongoing
Social Media/E-blasts (X, Facebook, LinkedIn)	Inform clients about OCWA and industry initiatives – point them towards other industry organizations and interesting current events within the water/wastewater sector	Ongoing
Client Survey/Client Advisory Board	Gather clients/stakeholder input on OCWA/industry activities and strategies	Annually/ Quarterly

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Initiative/Activity	Purpose	Timing
Abstracts/Articles/ Editorials	Position OCWA and OCWA employees as industry experts	Ongoing
Award submissions	Showcase/highlight the Agency’s expertise throughout various areas of the industry	Ongoing
OneWater® Education Program	Educate students about the value of water	Ongoing
“I Don’t Flush” public awareness campaign	Continue promoting overall message that “Your toilet and drains are not garbage cans.”	Ongoing
Webinars	Educate clients, prospective clients and industry professionals about OCWA’s service offerings through our Water Talks webinar series	Quarterly

11. Appendix F – Initiatives Involving Third Parties

As a leader in the water/wastewater sector in Ontario, OCWA is involved with many key organizations that support and promote water and wastewater technology adoption and research, with the goal of advancing and addressing water-related issues in Ontario. This includes establishing and maintaining collaboration and partnerships with the following organizations and institutions:

- ◆ **Ontario Water Consortium (OWC)** – OCWA and OWC have established a long-term partnership that outlines how the two organizations will work together to support the research, development, and demonstration of water technologies and practices, and provide strategic support to technology companies and municipalities. OWC and OCWA routinely include each other in educational events and promotional efforts, often in conjunction with other stakeholders. These events focus on increasing awareness of emerging water-related issues, and provide a forum for sharing knowledge between academic, industry, and public-sector stakeholders on how various municipalities are addressing identified issues. Working together, OCWA and OWC held Ontario's first Wastewater Intensification Workshop, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including researchers, technology providers, regulators, and facility managers, to discuss the potential benefits of wastewater process intensification, highlighting opportunities, specific case studies, and challenges to be overcome to realize broader technology adoption. A second workshop was held in 2023 to further connect OCWA's clients with wastewater intensification approaches, and connect municipal clients to the best practices and technical options that support and enrich their decisions making approaches. The OCWA/OWC partnership also resulted in the establishment of the Municipal Net Zero Working Group, which is comprised of more than 25 municipal leaders (both OCWA and non-OCWA clients) that meet and discuss challenges and opportunities around co-digestion and net zero projects.

- ◆ **Fleming College's Centre for Advancement of Water and Wastewater Technologies (CAWT)** – OCWA has collaborated with the CAWT at Fleming College on a number of water/wastewater innovation projects, including demonstrating CAWT partner technologies at OCWA-operated facilities in the City of Kawartha Lakes. The Agency looks forward to supporting opportunities to leverage CAWT demonstration and testing facilities to validate and certify new innovative wastewater solutions.

- ◆ **Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC):**

- **OCWA/University of Toronto (U of T) Drinking Water Research Group (DWRG) Collaboration** – OCWA provides financial support to the NSERC Chair in source water quality monitoring and advanced/emerging technologies for drinking water treatment. OCWA has an agreement to be a contributing funding partner from 2022-2027, alongside a number of clients that are part of the research consortium. This program and the supporting research team of experts have also been leveraged to provide training on process topics at the Agency, and support OCWA with process research in areas impacting Agency client systems.
- **University of Waterloo** – OCWA provides financial and in-kind support to the NSERC Industrial Research Chair in Water Treatment at the University of Waterloo. The Research Chair works closely with industry partners such as OCWA to identify and conduct applied research on topics that will help to improve the water treatment process, and are of interest to the water industry and municipal end-users.
- **Other NSERC Research Projects** – OCWA provides subject matter expertise, operational expertise, samples, data and in-kind support to multiple NSERC Chairs at Ontario universities and colleges where they conduct research around new emerging issues in the water and wastewater sector, including:

11. Appendix F – Initiatives Involving Third Parties

- **University of Western Ontario/University of Waterloo/Brown and Caldwell Consultancy** – Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in water and wastewater systems;
 - **University of Waterloo** – Microplastics in biosolids, energy savings in membrane aerated biofilm reactor technology, and stormwater infrastructure research such as retention ponds and impact on greenhouse gas reduction;
 - **University of Windsor** – Impacts of climate change on water supply systems and water demand, as well as the role of water systems in energy transition;
 - **Toronto Metropolitan University** – Greenhouse gas emissions detection and monitoring from North American Treatment sites which includes both water and wastewater; and
 - **York University** – Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) research and machine learning, with a long-term goal of supporting machine learning and artificial intelligence tools in water systems.
- ◆ **Canadian Water Network (CWN)** – OCWA provides support as a member of the Leadership Group for the CWN's Canadian Municipal Water Consortium, which connects utilities, municipalities, researchers, industry, government and other organizations to address Canada's municipal water management challenges and undertake initiatives to accelerate, advance and improve municipal water management decisions. OCWA supports various groups at the CWN as needed, including participating in the Canadian Municipal Water Consortium's Levels of Service Strategic Sharing Group.
 - ◆ **Canadian Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA)** – CWWA connects municipalities across the country on matters relating to federal legislation, programs and emerging trends in the water and wastewater sector. The Association provides and creates guidance documents, establishes research committees, and provides an authoritative voice at the federal level on all matters specific to the water sector. OCWA provides support to the CWWA and has a director seat on the Board for Ontario.
 - ◆ **Water Environment Association of Ontario (WEAO)** – WEAO represents wastewater professional and system owners in Ontario and is the Ontario chapter for the Water Environment Federation (WEF). OCWA has a seat on the Board of Directors and provides support and participates in WEAO and Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks working groups and committees engaged in various industry and environmental regulatory change discussions.
 - ◆ **The Ontario Water Works Association (OWWA)** – OWWA, with the support of its parent organization, the American Water Works Association (AWWA), is at the forefront of research, technology and policy development with respect to safe, sufficient, and sustainable drinking water. OWWA is a voluntary, not-for-profit association of more than 1,500 water industry professionals. OCWA has a seat on the Board of Directors and a number of OCWA staff provide in-kind support to the OWWA, including acting as Chair and Co-chair for various association committees.
 - ◆ **Ontario Municipal Water Association (OMWA)** – The Ontario Municipal Water Association (OMWA) represents more than 180 municipalities and public drinking water authorities in Ontario. OMWA brings together a wide cross-section of expertise to provide direction and leadership on policy, legislative and regulatory issues. OMWA is oriented towards action aimed at ensuring the best possible safety, quality, reliability and sustainability of drinking water in Ontario. OCWA has a seat on the Board of Directors.
 - ◆ **Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)** – OCWA is supporting PHAC in establishing a national accredited wastewater surveillance proficiency-testing program for Canada, building on the work previously undertaken to establish a wastewater-based epidemiology program for Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - ◆ **Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' Great Lakes Program – Biosolids Initiative** – This project reviews innovative practices on how municipalities can utilize solids from their wastewater treatment plants' waste stream and benefit the Great Lakes Basin.

11. Appendix F – Initiatives Involving Third Parties

OCWA has also established relationships and developed partnerships with a number of water technology companies over the years to support the development and testing of their new technologies, with the goal of addressing the Agency's client and operational needs. The Agency will continue to work with these companies in 2025 and beyond, while looking for opportunities to collaborate with new partners.