



# Owen Sound Transportation Company Accessibility Plan

## General

### Executive Summary

The Owen Sound Transportation Company (OSTC) is an operational enterprise agency of the Province of Ontario. The OSTC owns and operates a seasonal vehicle and passenger ferry, the *MS Chi-Cheemaun*, from Tobermory to Manitoulin Island and *MV Niska I*, a landing craft style ferry between Moosonee and Moose Factory Island on the Moose River, just south of James Bay in Northern Ontario.

The OSTC also provides vessel management services for the Ministry of Transportation Ontario for three vessels: the *MV Pelee Islander*, *MV Pelee Islander II* and the *MV Jiimaan* (not in service), operating under the Pelee Island Transportation Service, and a daily air service (third-party contract) between the Ontario mainland and Pelee Island during the winter months when the ferries are not operating.

The OSTC employs approximately 40 full-time employees and up to 140 seasonal employees during the summer.

### Accessibility Statement

The Owen Sound Transportation Company Limited (OSTC) is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

The OSTC is committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers for travellers with disabilities so that everyone is treated with dignity and can fully participate in the experience of travelling with us.

### Feedback and Contact Information

To provide feedback on our accessibility plan, or to request an alternate format of the plan or a description of our feedback process, please contact us through any of the options below and we will respond in the same format. Customers can also provide feedback anonymously.

Online feedback:

[www.ontarioferries.com/who-we-are/#wwa-contact-us](http://www.ontarioferries.com/who-we-are/#wwa-contact-us)

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Owen Sound Transportation Company  
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Owen Sound, ON N4K 5N7

Email:

[info@ontarioferries.com](mailto:info@ontarioferries.com)

Phone:

519-376-8740

Mail:

Manager of Health, Safety, Environment and Compliance  
717875 Hwy 6  
Owen Sound, ON N4K 5N7

### Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

OSTC's primary means of communication with customers is through the website. OSTC also communicates with customers by phone, email, social media and text message, and will provide information in an alternative format if requested.

If sailings are cancelled, OSTC notifies affected customers by the quickest means possible and sends notifications through email, SMS text and social media.

### Communication other than ICT

OSTC employees are trained to consult with individuals with disabilities to determine their preferred method of communication.

Public announcements are made on the vessels and at terminals. Staff members are available to assist with interpretation. Onboard safety videos are audible and close captioned in English.

Passengers who have requested assistance will receive a Passenger Briefing Card at boarding. The passenger will be directed to meet with a crew member, who will provide information about the ship's emergency procedures and ensure that the information is communicated in a manner that meets the passenger's needs. The Briefing Card is available in Braille on the *Chi-Cheemaun* and *Pelee Islander II*.

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### Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

OSTC's procurement policies currently may not meet all accessibility requirements. OSTC is required to follow Government of Ontario procurement policies.

OSTC will evaluate of procurement practices on an ongoing basis to improve accessibility.

### Delivery of Programs and Services

OSTC customers may make reservations online through our website, by phone with a Reservation Agent or in person at the terminals. Persons with disabilities who require assistance boarding the ferry are asked to self-identify so staff can make appropriate preparations.

All OSTC staff regardless of their position are required to complete basic accessibility training. Staff who regularly interact with customers complete additional training specific to their work and location. Basic training is completed online in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Additional training or orientation is completed onsite and includes procedures for assisting passengers onto the ferry, providing wheelchairs, operating the elevators and familiarising with emergency evacuation procedures for passengers with disabilities.

### Transportation

Passengers who use OSTC's ferries normally drive their own vehicles onto the ferry or board the ferry as walk-on passengers. OSTC employees do not drive passenger vehicles on the passenger's behalf and make every reasonable effort to assist drivers with manoeuvring their vehicles on the car deck, such as by prioritising boarding for drivers who need assistance or access to the elevator.

At some terminals, the terminal buildings are a distance from the ferry. Shuttles are available to transport walk-on passengers and baggage between the terminal and the ferry.

OSTC is a transportation service and our work to identify and remove barriers in this area is further addressed under "Built Environment."

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## Built Environment

### *Offices and Terminals*

OSTC has two Head Office buildings. One office is in Springmount and the second is leased space on the third floor of a medical building in Owen Sound. The Owen Sound office is not open to the public. The Springmount office is located on a trailhead and is open to the public for washroom facilities. The doors to the building and washrooms are not automatic and may present a barrier to some individuals.

OSTC operates terminal buildings and facilities in Tobermory, South Baymouth, Leamington, Kingsville and Pelee Island. The ferries are walking distance from the terminals and parking lots, and may be difficult for passengers to access if they require mobility assistance. OSTC has removed this barrier by providing customers with a shuttle service from the terminal to the ferry elevator if requested. Accessible parking and washrooms are available at all terminals and are marked with signs. All terminal buildings are equipped with automatic doors.

OSTC publishes information on the website on what assistive devices are available for customers to use while travelling with us. The same information is available by phone and in printed hard copy upon request.

### *MS Chi-Cheemaun*

At both the Tobermory and South Baymouth terminals, an elevator is available between the dock and the cafeteria deck. Passengers who require shuttle transportation from the terminal to the ferry are dropped off at this elevator, which is operated by trained terminal staff. The *Chi-Cheemaun* also has an elevator from the car deck to all interior decks. There one ramp with an automatic door that allows access between the outer deck and interior of the ferry.

### **Barriers**

The passenger elevator on the M.S. *Chi-Cheemaun* is original from 1974 and cannot fit all wheelchair sizes. Some doorways inside the ferry are narrow and cannot fit larger wheelchairs. There are also sills in some interior doorways that pose tripping hazards and they are marked in yellow and black. Passengers in wheelchairs may need assistance to get over these sills. The top deck on the outside is not accessible. The elevator and interior doorways cannot be widened because of the age and structure of the vessel.

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### Improvement Plan

OSTC offers assistive devices that fit inside the elevator and doorways to assist passengers. Any new vessels will be designed to comply with existing accessibility standards.

#### *MV Pelee Islander*

##### **Barriers**

All walk-on passengers board the *Pelee Islander* by the passenger ramp, which is designed to accommodate wheelchairs. There is a ramp to enter the passenger lounge, although the door is not automatic. The passenger lounge has designated seating for disabled persons. One washroom has a ramp but is small and may limit manoeuvrability inside. Access to the top deck is by stairs only and may limit access.

### Improvement Plan

Long-term planning includes designing and building a new vessel to replace the *Pelee Islander* that meets accessibility standards.

#### *MV Pelee Islander II*

All passengers may use an elevator from the car deck to reach the passenger lounge and cafeteria. Drivers who need the elevator are asked to self-identify so staff can direct them to the priority lane. The passenger lounge and cafeteria have designated seating for wheelchairs with tie-down brackets. Crewmembers receive annual training on how to secure wheelchairs using the brackets. Washrooms onboard are accessible with automatic doors.

##### **Barriers**

The doorways to the outside deck are watertight doors with high sills and heavy handles. This may limit access for passengers who wish to sit outside on the deck. There are only stairs to the outside seating areas so passengers in wheelchairs are unable to sit outside.

### Improvement Plan

OSTC will explore modifications that allow easier access to the outer deck that does not compromise the safety of the vessel.

## Employment

OSTC is committed to providing an equitable and fair working environment to all employees. All job postings have an inclusivity statement that welcomes applications from persons with

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disabilities and other under-represented groups. OSTC commits to providing all reasonable accommodations as requested by applicants during the recruitment process.

Shipboard employees are required by Transport Canada to undergo marine medical examinations that attest to their fitness to work onboard and respond effectively to marine emergencies. As such, OSTC is unable to offer shipboard employment to persons who cannot pass a marine medical examination, and this may limit eligibility for some people. Some terminal positions also require employees to be assessed for their fitness by a medical practitioner. These assessments include physical fitness and visual acuity. The physical fitness requirements of the terminal positions are established with the safety of the employee, passengers, ships and environment in mind.

OSTC is committed to supporting employees who require accommodations, modified work due to injury and early and safe return to work. These areas are managed by Human Resources.

## Consultations

OSTC welcomes feedback from all customers regarding the accessibility of our services. Consultations have been carried out through surveys sent by email to all customers after they travel with us. Feedback is also received in person by shipboard and terminal employees and is passed on to the office by department heads.

Most of the feedback received has concerned wheelchair accessibility while onboard the vessels. OSTC continues to explore options to minimize physical barriers that do not affect the safety of the vessel to enable greater mobility to persons with disabilities.

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