

Owen Sound Transportation Company Business Plan 2023-24 to 2025-26

If you require an alternative accessible format, please contact the Owen Sound Transportation Company at 519-376-8740. Note that throughout this document, a fiscal year (April 1 to March 31) will be referred to as, for example, 2023-24.



Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Mandate	3
3. OSTC's Mission, Vision and Values	4
4. Description.....	5
5. Strategic Direction	5
6. Implementation Plan	6
7. Overview of Current and Future Programs and Activities	9
8. Resources to Meet Goals and Objectives.....	11
9. Risk Identification, Assessment and Mitigation Strategies	13
10. Environmental Scan.....	17
11. Human Resources	20
12. Performance Measures	24
13. Financial Profile	25
14. Information Technology (IT)/Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) Plan	27
15. Initiatives Involving Third Parties	27
16. Communications Plan.....	28

1. Executive Summary

The Owen Sound Transportation Company, Limited (OSTC) was incorporated under the *Ontario Business Corporations Act, 1990* (the Act) and conforms to the legal requirements of the Act. The sole shareholder of the company is the Ontario Minister of Transportation (the Minister). The fiscal year 2023-24 to 2025-26 business plan has been developed with the following requirements in mind:

1. A Board Governed Operational Enterprise Agency as specified in the Agencies and Appointments Directive (AAD).
2. The Provincial Directives which apply to OSTC.
3. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the government and OSTC.
4. OSTC's Annual Letter of Direction provided by the Minister of Transportation on November 3, 2022.

OSTC delivers on its mandated commitment to provide safe, efficient and reliable ferry transportation in Ontario. OSTC transports passengers and goods safely from Moosonee to Moose Cree First Nation, located on Moose Factory Island, South Baymouth on Manitoulin Island to Tobermory on the Northern Bruce Peninsula, and Kingsville and Leamington to Pelee Island and Sandusky, Ohio (with air service from Windsor to Pelee Island in winter). In 2022-23, OSTC carried over 196,000 passengers and 86,000 vehicles on its routes.

OSTC's business plan focuses on four areas:

1. Developing metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to set goals against which we can measure the effectiveness and success of existing services and capture feedback to inform potential enhancements.
2. Ensuring that OSTC fulfils its obligations and statutory requirements as a government agency, including supply chain centralization and interim realty measures.
3. Diversifying revenues as per our Letter of Direction and increase efficiencies through a client-focused examination of our offerings, and how they can be improved.
4. Supporting government partners on the future of marine transportation management in Ontario, as needed.

OSTC continues to work on building capacity to enhance service delivery and effectiveness while navigating core challenges, including:

1. Staffing and crewing.
2. Maintaining and operating a fleet of vessels.
 - 2.1. The MS *Chi-Cheemaun* is now 50-years-old.
 - 2.2. The MV *Niska I* is a 13 –year old landing craft vessel
3. In the North, siltation in James Bay requires regular large-scale dredging. Dredging issues are present in both Kingsville and Leamington in the South.

2. Mandate

OSTC contributes to the provision of safe, efficient and reliable ferry transportation in the Province of Ontario by operating seasonal passenger, vehicle and commercial vehicle ferry services:

- MS *Chi-Cheemaun* on the Tobermory – South Baymouth, Manitoulin Island route
- MV *Niska I* on the Moosonee – Moose Factory Island route

Chi-Cheemaun is owned and operated by OSTC. *Niska I* is owned by OSTC but operated under a contract with a subsidiary company of Moose Cree First Nation (Complex RE).

OSTC also operates the Pelee Island Transportation Service (PITS) through a vessel management contract with MTO. The service has three ferry routes and one air service route:

- Kingsville to Pelee Island - serviced by the *MV Pelee Islander II (main vessel) and the MV Pelee Islander (backup vessel)*
- Leamington to Pelee Island – serviced by the *MV Pelee Islander II (main vessel) and the MV Pelee Islander (backup vessel)*
- Pelee Island to Sandusky, Ohio - serviced by the *MV Pelee Islander*.
- Pelee Island to Windsor - OSTC provides contract administration for an air service in the off season

OSTC promotes and contributes to economic development in all its service regions by supporting mobility and delivery of goods and services in geographically disparate areas of the province not served, or minimally served, by highway systems. OSTC services also promote and support the tourism sector through partnerships with local communities and regional interest holders. These include the municipalities and First Nations communities at its end points and surrounding areas.

As an agency, OSTC receives an Annual Letter of Direction from the Minister which ensures accountability, transparency, and the effective management of organizational risks. The letter also covers the expectations of good governance, effective operations and the reporting of enhanced performance indicators that the provincial government requires. The letter outlines ministerial expectations for service and performance, and the agency is required to address the expectations within its annual business plan and annual report.

3. OSTC’s Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

To provide safe, efficient, and reliable ferry transportation that serves clients from James Bay at the northern-most reaches of the province to Pelee Island at the southern-most reaches, which supports and integrates with the broader transportation network in Ontario.

Vision

To enhance mobility in geographically remote and under-represented areas of Ontario, by providing reliable transportation services that enhances access to goods and services, contributes to economic development and supports tourism in the surrounding regions.

Values

As an agency and operational enterprise of the Ontario government, our values reflect those of the broader public service. We strive daily to:

- Develop and encourage diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.

- Reaffirm our commitment and responsibility in improving relationships between the OSTC and Indigenous peoples and communities to improve our understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures.
- Be trustworthy and fair, acting honestly and honourably.
- Continuously improve, what we do while receiving and reviewing feedback from our collaborators and customers with a view for a better OSTC.
- Be good stewards of the resources of the people of Ontario.
- Continue to strive for operational excellence in the delivery of efficient, safe and reliable ferry services for passengers.

4. Description

OSTC was incorporated through the Letters Patent in 1921 under private ownership. Following its purchase from the private company in 1974, OSTC's shares were held in trust by the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) on behalf of the government of Ontario. On April 1, 2002, OSTC's shares were consolidated and transferred from ONTC to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines who established OSTC as an Operational Enterprise Agency of the Province of Ontario. In 2019, the MTO took over agency oversight responsibilities of OSTC from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) via an Order in Council.

OSTC's administration office is in Owen Sound, Ontario. The company owns and operates the following:

- *MS Chi-Cheemaun* - A seasonal passenger, vehicle and commercial truck ferry between the ports of Tobermory and South Baymouth, Manitoulin Island.
- *MV Niska I* - A passenger, vehicle and commercial truck ferry on the Moose River between Moosonee and Moose Factory Island, at the southern end of James Bay.

OSTC also provides vessel management and operations services for the MTO for three vessels:

- *MV Pelee Islander* and *MV Pelee Islander II* - Operating between Kingsville, Leamington, Pelee Island ON, and Sandusky Ohio on Lake Erie, as well as the *MV Jiimaan* (not in service).

There are no other ferry services in competition with the provincially-funded ferry services listed above, and there is no immediate potential for private operators to develop competing services. In the case of the Lake Huron and Lake Erie services, the vessels are the largest, Canadian-owned conventional vehicle and passenger ferries being operated on the Great Lakes.

5. Strategic Direction

OSTC's goals are developed to support and carry out the mandate of the company as established by the Province of Ontario and its sole shareholder, the Minister of Transportation.

OSTC's goals are to:

1. Provide safe, secure, regulatory compliant, accessible, reliable, and environmentally responsible marine transportation services to the public.
2. Achieve better financial performance by improving financial planning and oversight, increasing revenue and effectively managing costs.

3. Build and maintain strong, mutually beneficial relationships with the communities and regions served.
4. Build capacity by leveraging best practices to support the organization's goal to identify and pursue opportunities for efficiencies and savings and achieve business and operational service excellence.

6. Implementation Plan

Goal #1: Provide safe, secure, regulatory compliant, accessible, reliable, and environmentally responsible marine transportation services to the public.

Objective: Ensure Safety & Security

Implementation Tasks: Vessel Safety, Security & Regulatory Compliance

- Continued compliance with International Safety Management Code (ISM)
- Continued compliance with International Ship and Port Security Code (ISPS) where applicable
- Continued compliance with and development of enhancements to Company Security Plan
- Continued position-specific training for vessel crew members
- Continued participation in joint security exercises with government and law enforcement
- Continued participation in sector association meetings with regulators
- Develop and implement total compensation, succession, and recruitment plans
- Complete implementation of a new Fleet Management Software (FMS) that offers optimal procurement tools and asset management based on predicted lifecycles
- Implement and monitor the newly updated Safety Management System

Implementation Tasks: Passenger Safety, Security, Comfort and Accessibility

- Continue crew training programs: Marine Emergency Duties, Marine First Aid, CPR, Automated External Defibrillator (AED), First Responder, Passenger Safety Management, Server's Intervention, Safe Food Handling, Security, and position-specific training as required
- Continue implementation of a multi-year interior renovation plan for passenger and crew spaces
- Continue to comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) Standards as they come into effect; design renovations and modifications to vessels incorporating AODA standards wherever possible, and explore additional options for complying with AODA as necessary

Implementation Tasks: Employee Safety & Security

- Continue employee training programs: Occupational Health and Safety, Violence in the Workplace, Confined Space, Fall Arrest, Forklift Operation, Transportation of Dangerous Goods, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), and any other training that may be required
- Utilize a new Fleet Management System (FMS) for Job Safety Analysis and Risk Management Matrix for our crews

Objective: Ensure Reliability and Environmental Responsibility

Implementation Tasks

- Continue to maintain OSTC vessels in accordance with Planned and Preventative Maintenance Programs
- Engage the Fleet Management System (FMS) to take advantage of a new capability to track asset performance and measure reliability; data will be made available to better manage maintenance objectives, budget, and identify equipment for renewal considerations
- Monitor environmental management plan results for all vessels
- Monitor and audit vessel discharge plans and records
- Continue Oil Spill Response training for all ship and terminal facility employees
- Maintain Green Marine Level 2 certification and implement additional systems to elevate level wherever possible

Goal #2: Achieve better financial performance by improving financial planning and oversight, increasing revenue and effectively managing costs.

Objective: Improve Financial Planning and Oversight

Implementation Tasks:

- Recruit and retain critical senior financial staff
- Update financial recording and reporting processes: digitize recording, approval, and storage of financial matters
- Continue to build capacity to create regular operating and capital financial reports, as well as ridership statistics
- Train and develop financial staff

Objective: Enhance Revenue Opportunities

Implementation Tasks:

- Develop an evidence-based strategic marketing initiative to reach new markets of potential passengers, taking into consideration constraints of vessel capacity and regulatory requirements.
- Optimize new online reservation system with flexibility to adjust for any fare changes and service purchase options
- Re-introduce on-board customer experiences including dining/entertainment cruises, August Star Gazing, Parks Canada Interpretations of National Marine Park, local crafts and story-telling, and local brew makers' tasting events
- Explore opportunities to develop tourism experience packages with regional partners to provide an integrated experiential value chain for ferry users
- Identify and remove barriers that deter customers from using the ferry
- Explore a comprehensive fare strategy that not only considers revenue optimization, but compares fares with other similar operations across Canada, and at the same time simplifies the reservation process for clients.

Objective: Identify Opportunities for Enhanced Efficiencies to Reduce Expenses

Implementation Tasks:

- Fully implement the Fleet Management System (FMS) to incorporate shipboard or shore-based inventory tracking and streamline procurement functions

- Implement employee development and training plans for all positions and closely monitor employee performance against goals to optimize Value for Money policies
- Optimize company purchasing policy to ensure all goods or services acquired are necessary and procured at the best value for dollar expended. FMS offers new efficiency tools for this purpose
- Continue annual review of the current operating schedule and season to evaluate the cost/benefit of schedule modifications on the ferry service and regional economies
- Work closely with Supply Ontario on all procurements requiring its advice and guidance

Goal #3: Build and maintain strong, mutually beneficial relationships with the communities and regions served.

Objective: Develop Community Relationships

Implementation Tasks: Ongoing participation and support of or in, and resumption of activities

- Continue to support and develop regional tourism partnerships
- Continue to participate in tourism development seminars and conferences
- Identify and participate in strategic promotion & advertising partnerships
- Continue to provide opportunities for public and user input through Ferry Service Community Advisory Committee meetings and customer surveys
- Work with Complex RE, Moose Cree First Nation and the Town of Moosonee to establish a protocol for regular meetings and communication practices to ensure there is a forum to discuss issues and, when needed, conduct Public Information Sessions to engage the broader community.
- Annually monitor ferry route channel depths to ensure safe navigation and provide early warning of any potential ferry service disruptions; where dredge operations are identified, OSTC will work with community leaders to ensure the right fit with the least impact

Objective: Developing Team and Succession Planning

Implementation Tasks: Promote industry opportunities

- Continue to provide onboard co-op opportunities for navigation and engineering cadets
- Maintain visibility in secondary school systems throughout Ontario
- Explore opportunities to provide co-op opportunities for high school students
- Provide seasonal employment opportunities to post-secondary students (Owen Sound Reservations Department)
- Develop succession plans to identify future personnel needs
- Complete comprehensive wage and benefit assessment for all positions (including requirements of Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Framework)
- Implement recruitment plans (from succession and compensation plans)

Goal #4: Build capacity by: a) creating a dedicated Human Resources Department, b) improving key systems regarding reservations, asset management, financial reporting, and employee collaboration, and c) updating and improving policies, processes and procedures to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of operations in adherence with all applicable government directives

Objective: Improve Capacity to Attract and Retain, Develop, and Manage Staff

Implementation Tasks: Create a dedicated HR Department and Systems

- Complete creation of a dedicated HR department
- Implement new payroll, benefit, leave, and performance review systems accessible to all staff

Objective: Improve Key Systems

Implementations Tasks:

- Optimize the use and effectiveness of a newly adopted FMS, point-of-sale retail system, and Bookit reservation system; train key staff in working with vendors to take maximum advantage of capabilities
- Hire a Manager for Financial Reporting, Planning and Analysis to meet or exceed financial reporting requirements in the AAD
- Implement a performance review system for all staff
- Negotiate two major unionized contracts, with support from the Ministry and third-party experts as needed

Objective: Improve Policies, Processes and Procedures

Implementation Tasks:

- Create corporate-wide policies in all areas of operability
 - Amalgamate benefits to one provider, including health, life and disability insurance
 - Develop onboarding, probation and termination policies
 - Map staff pay scales to equivalent positions
 - Consolidate vacation, statutory holiday and leave provisions company-wide
 - Develop an enhanced risk monitoring and evaluation process

7. Overview of Current and Future Programs and Activities

7.1 Vessel Charters

The MS *Chi-Cheemaun* has historically been chartered for up to four dinner cruises from the Owen Sound harbour during the month of April, weather permitting. Vessel charters are also available during the non-peak sailing season at a premium rate and are operated outside the regular sailing schedule. OSTC will continue to identify opportunities to generate additional revenue and work with the ministry on mitigating any potential risks, such as staffing and crewing restrictions. Shore-side events on the ship during the winter months cannot be licensed and are limited to events where alcohol is not served.

7.2 MS *Chi-Cheemaun* Food, Beverage & Retail Services

OSTC reviews all food, beverage and retail services continuously. OSTC will implement Squirrel, a new point-of-sale system that is commonly used in restaurants across Canada. OSTC plans to utilize this system to more effectively monitor and manage expenditures and revenues over time.

7.3 Website Development

OSTC's website was re-designed in 2015-16 and is now accessible and WCAG 2.0 Level A compliant. OSTC continues to monitor web traffic trends and makes site improvements on an ongoing basis in

response to customers' changing needs. OSTC continues to work to meet its commitment on ensuring that its website is fully bilingual by December 31, 2023.

In the spring of 2023, OSTC revised the online reservation portion of the website to simplify the booking process. The reduction in complexity is reducing reservation booking errors and improving the overall customer experience. In the future, the "Bookit" system is expected to reduce dropped calls and errors by over 50 per cent.

OSTC will continue to explore ways to improve customer experience with its website.

7.4 Fuel Consumption Control

OSTC's standard operating procedure is to run MS *Chi-Cheemaun* on only two of the four engines, alternating engine use on a weekly rotation basis. This allows OSTC to optimize fuel consumption and keep the operating hours on the equipment as low as possible to lengthen the service life of the machinery and maintain low carbon footprint under the current circumstances.

Fuel consumption control is managed through sound company operating practices that keep key equipment in line with factory standards. Adherence to operating procedures, factory maintenance recommendations, employee training and real-time condition monitoring supports OSTC's drive to consume only the fuel needed to maintain service by design.

Furthermore, OSTC dry docks each vessel every five years, a Transport Canada hull requirement. This provides an opportunity to clean propellers and wash and recoat hulls to the highest standards. This action lends itself to reduced fuel consumption, the propellers are more effective, and the hull glides through the water with less drag when cleaned.

As fuel prices are expected to continue to rise to record levels over the business plan cycle, the company will maximize its efforts to conserve fuel, both from cost and environmental impact standpoints.

7.5 Living Quarters Upgrades (*Chi-Cheemaun*)

In 2019-20, accommodations for staff were refurbished. This provided an improved, modernized and welcoming living experience for crew. Renovations through 2022-23 continued to improve living arrangements for staff. We are adding exercise and recreational equipment as many crew members live onboard in the sailing season. This investment in safe, marine-quality floor, furnishings and linings supports our objective to retain the valued team members.

7.6 Federal Code for Ferry Accessibility and AODA (2005)

Following the enactment of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) in 2005, regulations were introduced by the Province requiring existing and new public transportation vehicles to become accessible. OSTC had already begun the process of upgrading accessibility on the MS *Chi-Cheemaun* to meet the Federal Code of Accessibility as is in place on the Pelee Island ferry service. The provincial regulations have since adopted the Federal Code as the provincial standard.

OSTC established and implemented policies, practices, and procedures for the appropriate provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities effective January 1, 2010. This is referred to as the

“Customer Service Standard” and has been closely followed by the Transportation, Employment, and Communications Standards with which the company is also required to comply.

OSTC is committed to meeting all required standards to the extent physically possible, recognizing that the vessel was built in 1974 (pre-AODA).

7.7 Communication Upgrades

New pilot communication upgrades are being implemented now for the Manitoulin Island and the Pelee Island services through Starlink to provide increased wireless coverage over its route and to improve business processes capability and support personal use of internet for ship’s crew as a quality-of-life improvement. Once the pilot is complete, OSTC expects service will then be made available to passengers. This service will be implemented in the 2024 sailing season.

7.8 Wave Wall Construction

In 2022-23, OSTC launched a capital project to protect the South Baymouth dock from extreme weather overtopping and undermining damage. The project is currently underway and is estimated to be completed by the Fall of 2023.

7.9 Operating Channel Maintenance at Moosonee

In 2022-23, OSTC launched a project to improve navigation conditions over the route connecting Moosonee to Moose Factory Island. Due to shallow water depth, OSTC initiated a dredging operation to restore safe navigation in the area and to ensure the lifeline of goods, equipment and travel between Moose Factory Island and the mainland. While the scope of dredging has increased since 2022, the project is expected to be completed in 2023.

8. Resources to Meet Goals and Objectives

8.1 Human Resources

Currently, OSTC has a complement of 37 full-time (Administration and Ships’ Officers) and 166 seasonal and part-time employees. Part-time employees are hourly workers who work between 6 and 9 months of the year on board the ships, or on shore at the terminals while the ships are in operation. Part-time employees also include the additional crews hired for summer sailing schedules only.

Moose Factory Island ferry crew are employees of Complex RE Limited Partnership, owned by the Moose Cree Group of Companies Limited Partnership, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Moose Cree First Nation.

8.2 Facilities and Ships

No new building facilities are required in the life of this plan for the Tobermory to South Baymouth ferry route. AODA compliant ticket booths were installed at both Tobermory and South Baymouth terminal lots in 2016-17. The South Baymouth Terminal building was renovated and made to be AODA compliant in 2015-16, and the Tobermory Terminal followed suit in 2016-17.

OSTC’s administration office in Owen Sound is being evaluated for future use and Infrastructure Ontario is being engaged in 2023-24 to support exploring potential options for future administration office

locations as needed. The agency is planning to assess short-term leasing options for the duration of the evaluation.

The Moose Factory Island ferry service will require the acquisition of a suitable, permanent winter haul-out and maintenance area within the life of this plan. The agency will initiate planning activities in preparation for a feasibility study to explore alternate winter berthing options in the Moosonee and James Bay region for *Niska I*.

8.3 Technology

IT Assets

OSTC reviews its Information Technology Policies, Systems and Equipment on an annual basis. Hardware and software are maintained, upgraded, or replaced when the existing technology becomes unreliable, or more efficient technology becomes available.

OSTC contracts an external IT firm to provide IT support and security to OSTC's systems. This is in the process of being staffed internally.

OSTC is undergoing systems modernization to improve information governance and provide accessible data for use in decision making. The new systems, including the reservation system, contact centre system, fleet management, and the Point-of-Sale (POS) system, should provide the data needed to support outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.

Reservation system

OSTC implemented a new reservations system in 2021. The new system provides customers with improved information and reservation accessibility. The system presents a future opportunity to capitalize on a wider range of promotional and discount fares on underutilized ferry departures as organizational comfort with the system improves.

Point of Sale (POS) System

A new POS system will be implemented to replace the in-house developed system. The project is expected to be implemented in phases, taking a multi-year approach as increasingly sophisticated features are integrated into operations, with more advanced features of the system to be adopted beginning in 2024-25.

Contact Centre Software

Contact Centre software is also being implemented now and is already providing improved call center metrics reporting and improved customer service using the chat function, call back queue, and call escalation/routing.

Fleet Management Software (FMS)

The FMS is under implementation and will significantly improve operational visibility and support data-driven decisions. It will assist in the management of asset lifespans, procurement, and projected repair and upkeep costs.

9. Risk Identification, Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

OSTC will develop, in 2023-24, a systematic process for identifying, examining, and assessing agency risks for both operations and capital equipment. The Fleet Management System will continue to enable OSTC to monitor capital assets in real time, and plan for mitigation should a critical incident occur. Similarly, OSTC's new financial and human resource information systems will support timely decision-making for operational risk mitigation. The following identifies our current and foreseen risks, and they will be incorporated into our new asset management, human resource, and financial systems.

9.1 Risk Assessment

OSTC's primary focus while transporting people and goods on the ferry is to ensure a safe, secure, environmentally responsible, dependable, and regulatory compliant operation.

OSTC does not have access to replacement vessels for either the Manitoulin Island or the Moose Factory Island ferry services. Therefore, all probable failure scenarios have been assessed, and procedures established to mitigate the negative operational and/or safety effects of any type of failure. These are not infallible, and risk exists. Contingency planning is crucial to the uninterrupted operation of ferry service.

In accordance with the provincial government Treasury Board Secretariat Guide (2021) for board-governed agency business planning, OSTC includes in its business plans an assessment of risks and the plans to mitigate these risks.

OSTC consults continuously with the MTO to ensure all risk categories are understood. This ensures an open and transparent process for broad risk mitigation.

9.2 Risk Identification

Risk	Description/Notes	Risk Type	Mitigation	Owner
Impacts to MS Chi-Cheemaun services to due to advanced vessel age	The advanced age of the MS Chi-Cheemaun may result in increased downtime for repairs/maintenance as well as a risk of mechanical failure or loss. This may result in disruptions to the ferry's regular schedule and impact passengers and businesses.	Vessels	<p>Previously, re-powering of the MS <i>Chi-Cheemaun</i> in 2006-07 included redundancies in the engine room that enable the ship to operate in a mechanical breakdown of one engine. In addition, OSTC has upgraded the remaining systems that have no back-up, are original, and have potential to stop operations. This includes hydraulic openings systems for bow and stern doors, stabilizer system, and the steering system.</p> <p>Short Term Plans: Annual maintenance and development of a critical parts inventory to ensure the ferry experiences little to no down-time. Loss of two engines simultaneously is extremely unlikely.</p> <p>OSTC to explore stabilizer systems options including timelines and costs.</p> <p>Long Term Plans: Explore potential plans and considerations for a vessel and infrastructure needs study to assess long-term vessel options (e.g., replacement) and requirements.</p>	OSTC
Failure of or damage to the ramp making it unusable for loading/unloading the MS <i>Chi-Cheemaun</i>	There are no alternate facilities with ramps suitable for the ship.	Vessels	OSTC has the ramp systems professionally inspected and serviced annually. OSTC also engages in asset management, which is key for planning any necessary replacements	OSTC
Inability to dock due to low water levels	Climate change is significantly changing Great Lakes water levels. Each vessel is dependent on shore infrastructure for proper docking and if water levels fall too low, safe	Vessels	OSTC will continue to collaborate with MTO and other potential partners to seek short- and long-term solutions.	TC

Risk	Description/Notes	Risk Type	Mitigation	Owner
	under keel clearances will be compromised, particularly in higher sea states resulting in unsafe entry conditions. Regular dredging may not suffice.			
Power/Mechanical Failure	Complete power or mechanical failure at dock, terminal and office facilities	IT/IM	<p>There are no backup systems in place at terminals or on docks with the exception of Tobermory where perishables are stored. However, South Baymouth Terminal has a portable gas-powered generator which could be used in the event of an extended power outage.</p> <p>OSTC plans to engage a contractor to assess options for the supply and installation of an inline generator for South Baymouth.</p> <p>IT functions are being improved with cloud-based storage for core documents and the booking system.</p>	OSTC
Technology / Cyber-Security	IT systems could fail or be compromised which may impact business continuity.	IT/IM	OSTC capital upgrades may be required. OSTC is recruiting an Owen Sound-based IM/IT/Systems position to provide organization-wide IT support. Permanent fixes will await evaluation of OSTC's administrative office and potential future space.	OSTC
Ship-based staff shortages globally, applies to all OSTC vessels.	OSTC ship operational capability is under complete control of Transport Canada along with the minimum staffing requirements.	Human Resources	OSTC is strengthening recruitment overseas and in markets not previously looked at.	MTO and OSTC
Office professional staff are difficult to recruit and retain. Continuity at risk.	Significant turnover in both senior management and professional staff in the past 18 months has OSTC at elevated risk as this affects vessel scheduling, maintenance, booking, finance, IT/IM and has had an effect on staff engagement.	Human Resources	OSTC is working with MTO to determine how best to recruit and retain staff.	OSTC

Risk	Description/Notes	Risk Type	Mitigation	Owner
Failed labour negotiations resulting in a strike or lock-out during the operating season.	A labour disruption would halt service as unions represent 80% of ship-based staff.	Human Resources	OSTC will continue to maintain good relationships with both SIU (north) and UNIFOR (south) to stay informed of potential challenges/issues.	OSTC
Transport Canada (TC) owns the Tobermory & South Baymouth wharf facilities which are on Transport Canada's list for divestiture. Should TC sell the facilities, OSTC will need to deal with a new owner, or buy it.	The current contract with TC outlines that if OSTC operates the ferry service, TC must own and maintain the docks. Should TC divest the docks, the new owner will be responsible unless the parties agree to different terms.	Facilities	MTO has first rights of refusal, if TC were to sell. MTO and OSTC are collaboratively meeting with TC.	MTO/TC

9.3 Mitigation Strategies

Preventive Measures

OSTC is highly regulated for the purpose of assessing and managing risks. It is the responsibility of the individual Classification Society surveyor (on behalf of Transport Canada) to determine if a company is applying regulation properly and operating its vessels within the regulations:

1. OSTC reviews all new legislation and regulations, and implements changes as required by law. Those regulations include but are not exclusive to safety equipment, operating manuals, crew certification, fire protection, emergency evacuation, and training requirements.
2. OSTC operates all vessels in accordance with the Canada Shipping Act and ancillary regulations; and all other relevant provincial and federal regulations including but not limited to Pollution Prevention and Control, Workplace Health and Safety, and Marine Transportation of Dangerous Goods.
3. OSTC independently assesses safety, security and environmental risks that may not be required within regulation and incorporates procedures and training in OSTC's Safety Management Systems.

Insurance

OSTC carries insurance policies for Marine Hull, Marine P&L, Property, CGL, Auto, Boiler and Machinery, D&O, Fiduciary, Crime, EPL, Business Practices, Internet Security, and General Liability insurance coverage. Insurance coverage is reviewed annually to ensure there is adequate coverage in all areas of the organization.

10. Environmental Scan

10.1 Economic Conditions/Business Climate

Without the ferry, Manitoulin Island, Algoma District in Northern Ontario and Bruce Peninsula would experience significant impacts both from tourism and commercial initiatives. The 400/69 highways, the alternatives, would pass them by and/or negatively affect their social and economic livelihoods.

The Moose Factory Island ferry is a necessary means of transportation and provides significant socio-economic benefits as, without the ferry, the residents on Moose Factory Island would have very limited access to fuel and other mainland goods and services. Vehicle and passenger traffic has not fluctuated greatly over the past few years. The ferry is certified by Transport Canada for the safe carriage of passengers and can transport large commercial vehicles.

Competition

The Manitoulin Island ferry service is an optional mode of transportation for customers to reach their destination. Persons traveling to Manitoulin Island and northern Ontario, as well as from northern Ontario travelling to southern Ontario, can travel by Provincial Highways 400 and 69, and bypass the ferry entirely.

Loss of traffic to Highways 400 and 69 is high-risk for the ferry service as a large proportion of customers are not using the ferry service to visit Manitoulin Island but are using it to reach Northern Ontario beyond Manitoulin Island. Past customer surveys indicate that only 30% of ferry traffic identifies Manitoulin Island as their destination.

In 2023-24, OSTC plans to assess excursions and same-day walk-on fares to identify opportunities to encourage greater use of our service. The two one-way fares required for a return voyage remain

competitive with local tour boat operators in Tobermory. Many tourists opt to take the glass bottom boat tours for the experience and are not aware of the experience that the Manitoulin service can offer. OSTC will continue to promote the walk-on options through social media campaigns.

MV *Niska I* is the only means of transporting vehicles between Moosonee and Moose Factory Island, except for winter roads when available.

MS Chi-Cheemaun Ferry Traffic & Fares

OSTC undertakes an annual cost and benefit exercise using origin and destination information gathered through the customer survey to determine whether time, cost or distance are one of the factors that influences the ferry customer's choice between taking the ferry or driving around Georgian Bay.

OSTC also performs an annual comparison of OSTC's fare structure to other Canadian ferry services operating vessels of similar size to the *MS Chi-Cheemaun* on routes of comparable distance.

Previously, OSTC established an annual vehicle deck utilization rate of 67.7% as the short-term traffic improvement target. This target was based on the vessel's capacity and historical trends. Deck utilization declined during the 2020 through 2022 sailing seasons but is expected to recover by 2026. OSTC will continue to review and develop key performance measures to monitor vessel/service usage and traffic.

Vehicle deck utilization is measured as the percentage of usable vehicle deck space occupied per departure. There are eight vehicle categories which have been assigned average vehicle lengths. Total footage for each load is calculated by multiplying the number of vehicles per category by the assigned average length. Due to the averaging in the calculation and the variables introduced by overweight pieces, a "full" load can be anywhere in the range between 78% and 85% of total available footage.

Steps OSTC has taken to maximize ferry revenues:

- OSTC has modified the fare structure to arrive at prices that balance revenues and customer costs. This included the introduction of Off-Peak (spring/fall) and Peak (summer) pricing.
- A fare simplification exercise is underway to explore opportunities for more understandable fare structures for passengers and staff.
- Post-COVID, OSTC continues to review and reintroduce services such as dinner cruises, live entertainment, craft brew tastings, artisan shows and sales, storytelling and interpretation, and vessel charters.

OSTC's focus will be on generating more vehicle and passenger traffic to improve revenue levels through additional marketing and new ferry experience initiatives. An overhaul of the merchandise offered in the on-board "Boatique" began in 2014-15 and continues to focus on locally and regionally produced products. New and attractive merchandise is acquired yearly to accommodate shifting tastes.

10.2 Labour & Fuel Costs

In 2021-22, Labour and Fuel costs comprised 43% and 9% of OSTC's annual operating expenses (excluding amortization), respectively. Fuel costs were high during 2021-22 and are expected to continue to increase.

10.3 Facilities Supporting Service Operation

Ships

MS *Chi-Cheemaun* was built in 1974 and is 105.61 meters long, 18.99 meters wide, and 6990.65 gross register tons. The steel ferry has two passenger levels containing a dining room, gift shop, tourism information centre and two seating lounges. The ship is able to accommodate up to 138 standard size automobiles in the multi-ramped vehicle deck, and 638 passengers per trip.

MV *Niska I* was built in 2010 and is 27 meters long, 10.5 meters wide and 153.09 gross register tons. It is an open deck ferry with no interior passenger accommodation. The ferry can carry up to 10 standard automobiles and 47 passengers, or up to two full length transport trucks per 20-minute crossing.

Terminal Buildings and Properties

The Tobermory and South Baymouth Ferry Terminal Buildings are of stone and brick construction with a combination of flat and peaked roofs. Originally built in 1973, the buildings have required roof and window repairs over the last 30 years. Both buildings have had their interiors renovated (South Baymouth in 2014-15, and Tobermory in 2016-17) and now conform to AODA requirements for persons with disabilities.

OSTC Main Office Building

OSTC holds office space at the intersection of Ontario Provincial Highways 6 and 21 in Owen Sound. The land is leased from Grey Sauble Conservation Authority until 2052, but OSTC owns the office building. OSTC has leased a temporary office space in the Owen Sound Medical Centre, while an evaluation of OSTC's administrative office and potential future space is conducted.

Tobermory, South Baymouth & Owen Sound Wharf Facilities

Transport Canada is the owner of the Tobermory and South Baymouth dock walls, and the Owen Sound harbour wall used exclusively by OSTC, all adjacent to OSTC-owned properties.

OSTC owns a small piece of riverfront property and a water lot on the west wall of the Owen Sound inner harbour where the MS *Chi-Cheemaun* is berthed in the winter months.

All the above wharves (Tobermory, South Baymouth, and Owen Sound) are on Transport Canada's list for divestiture. Any future discussions regarding the transfer of facility ownership will be conducted between the MTO and Transport Canada.

Moosonee Winter Storage Haul-Out Facility

In 2011, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) began construction of a marine railway at the MV *Niska I* loading ramp. Construction was stopped when excavation of the piece of land revealed that it was predominantly marine clay, and unsuitable to provide the stability required for the railway. As an interim measure, while other options were being investigated, MV *Niska I* was hauled out on the Moosonee Transportation Limited (MTL) marine railway on an adjacent property. The vessel has wintered on the MTL marine railway from 2011 through 2023. Plans for a more permanent solution are being investigated.

Navigable Route/Dredging

South Baymouth Channel: In 2013, lower than normal water levels threatened to reduce the safe navigational channel for MS *Chi-Cheemaun's* approach into the South Baymouth dock. Water levels rebounded in 2014, but with no certainty of sustained higher water levels over the long term. The agency will continue ongoing discussions with Transport Canada to identify options to ensure safe navigation through this channel and include consultations with community interests as needed.

OSTC follows and reviews weather patterns, ice formation and break-up, and water levels as the start of each sailing season approaches. Water level readings are observed and recorded by all captains on all ships prior to taking a ship away from the dock on every crossing, to ensure safe passage.

Moose River: Lower than normal water levels have reduced the safe navigational route for the MV *Niska I* to Moose Factory Island. A significant dredging project is underway and will be completed in 2024-25

Owen Sound Harbour: Owned by Transport Canada, the Owen Sound Harbour has been identified as an asset for divestment. The ministry, OSTC and Transport Canada will continue discussions on options and approaches.

10.4 Environment

OSTC ferry operations are in full compliance with all applicable environmental regulations.

OSTC is a participant in the Green Marine environmental performance program and is currently certified at a Level 2 out of 5 for both terminals and vessels. The Pelee Island ferry service is part of this program and is involved in an annual verification exercise with the north.

10.5 Passenger Demographics:

In 2016, a new online survey was created and promoted through OSTC's website, ticket receipts and social media. OSTC plans to initiate steps towards the resumption of customer survey activities during the FY 2023-24, which was discontinued through the 2020 to 2022 seasons.

The following demographics serve as our previous baseline. The 2023 results will provide input for new service offerings and the trending results will provide input during any vessel renewal plans.

Over the last several years, the ferry service has experienced an increase in middle-aged to older customers. Approximately 67% of customers are 46 years of age and older. The professional compilation of traveler information collected over 8 years during the market feasibility study showed that 38% of passengers travel to the ferry from Southwestern Ontario (bordered by Toronto on the east and Windsor on the west). Customers from Manitoulin Island, Bruce Peninsula and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) made up 37% of the respondent base.

Survey results consistently showed that 40% to 50% of travelers take the ferry for recreation and vacation purposes and 30% to 40% uses the ferry because it is the shortest route to their destination.

11. Human Resources

11.1 Building Capacity. Managing Change.

While OSTC has managed continuous change over recent years, it recognizes the importance of securing stability and consistency in leadership roles to sustain operational effectiveness. To achieve this, the OSTC intends to develop and retain talent through staffing and succession management strategies. The HR component of this OSTC business plan reflects our analysis of the human resources required to continue to build organizational capacity and close operational gaps. Further, it identifies human resource policies, processes and systems, and recommends solutions to manage change, ensure alignment with public sector policies and programs, and to modernize and stabilize the operation.

The HR strategy considers management’s assessment based on front-line interaction with employees and a 2022 Employee Engagement Survey conducted with employees to gather quantitative and qualitative input on priorities.

The organization chart illustrates the organization-wide human resources that will support the planning and manage the change to a modern, public service marine operation. The other key resources required are strategy, policies and processes, systems, and time to manage change.

The added capacity of skilled and experienced senior managers working closely with front-line technical, specialist and administrative employees will enable the business objectives outlined in our business plan to be realized. The business planning cycle for this report is ambitious; OSTC anticipates that this three to four-year window will be sufficient to accomplish HR business objectives.

11.2 Status of Labour Negotiations

OSTC has five collective agreements with two unions: the Seafarers’ International Union of Canada (SIU) and UNIFOR.

SIU: The SIU represents unlicensed seafarers working on the *Chi-Cheemaun*, and the Dock and Stockhands working at the Tobermory and South Baymouth terminals. These two collective agreements will expire on December 31, 2023, and bargaining will take place in the autumn of 2023.

UNIFOR: Three collective agreements (unlicensed employees including terminal staff, engineers and officers excluding chief engineers and captains, and chief engineers) expired on December 31, 2022. These agreements were renegotiated in early 2023 and the new agreements will expire on December 31, 2025.

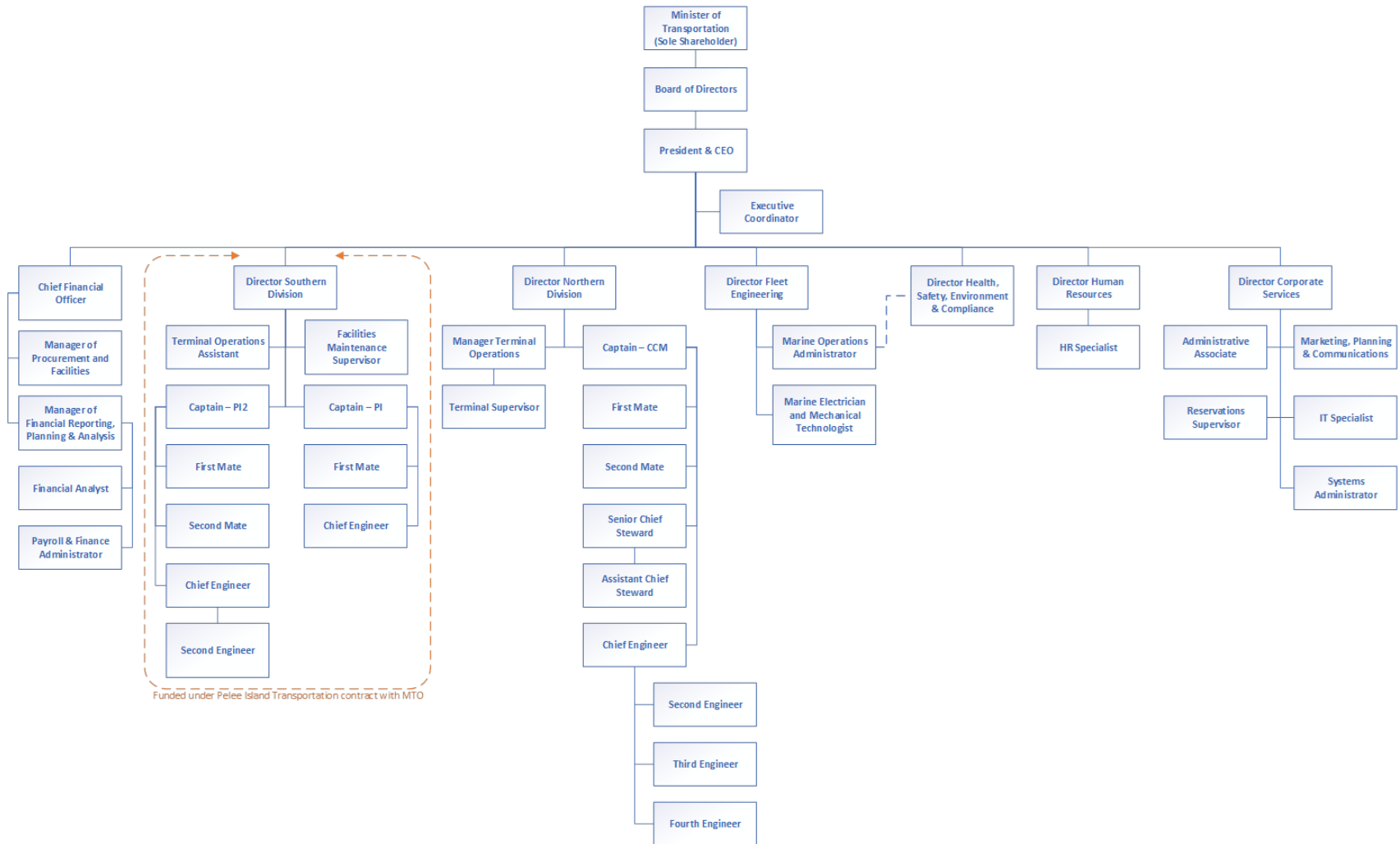
OSTC will continue to subcontract with Complex RE (previously known as Moose Band Development Corporation) to handle the day-to-day operations of the MV *Niska I*. The contract was signed in April of 2023.

11.3 Organization Chart and Capacity Analysis

A new organization chart illustrates the human resource capacity required to address the strategic direction, business objectives and implementation plan set out in this business plan.

OSTC will be focusing its efforts to address the critical Human Resource, Financial and Technical Management and support position needs.

11.4 OSTC Organization Chart



11.5 Human Resource Business Objectives

The human resource strategies to address business objectives include the requisite people, policies, processes and systems. The company operates in a cyclical, seasonal manner with a geographically disparate employee base, multi-location workplaces (including shore and ship offices), a broad employee demographic profile, and an intense operating season.

We are committed to the development of HR policies, programs and strategies that meet the needs of both the organization and the people who bring their commitment, skills, and abilities to work every day. We endeavor to engage employees at times and use methods that meet their needs and optimize their participation.

Interdependency also plays a role in the timing required to roll out policies, processes, and systems to meet business objectives. As new human resources are added and programs are developed, the organization builds capacity to enable objectives.

Implementation is based on the availability and outputs of other people and programs, making the timeline for delivery fluid. The organization requires a full-time senior HR Director and an intermediate HR specialist to build the human resource capacity to deliver on these priorities (Table HR 02).

Table HR 02: Human Resource Business Objectives	Timeline
1. Develop and implement a total compensation management plan (including pay equity).	2023
2. Survey employees, conduct research and advise on benefits planning.	2023-2024
3. Develop and implement human resource policies and procedures.	2023-2025
4. Develop and implement a company-wide retention plan.	2023-2026
5. Develop and implement recruitment strategy.	2023-2025
6. Develop and implement a succession plan and training policy and program that contributes to employee retention and succession planning of skilled employees.	2023-2025

11.6 Employee Engagement Metrics

In late 2022, OSTC conducted its first-ever Employee Engagement Survey. OSTC’s senior management wanted to provide employees with a structured, quantifiable, and anonymous way to share individual perspectives on a range of topics to supplement one-on-one and town hall discussions.

The employee satisfaction survey is one of the most used resources by leaders and HR departments because of its simplicity. This is an effective way to know the status of teams and the results indicate how to improve, respond appropriately to concerns and, in some cases, anticipate and address potential workplace issues.

11.7 Business Plan Objectives

1. Develop and Implement a Total Compensation Management Plan (including Pay Equity)

Total compensation is the collective compensation provided to employees in exchange for their services and includes base compensation as well as benefits.

Subject to government direction, OSTC will continue to explore alternative work arrangements where feasible. In the Owen Sound head office, the company has previously piloted a hybrid work environment (work three days in the office and two days at home) and a flexible approach to work hours.

At OSTC, licensed officers work a 7 days on/7 days off rotation; this has become a consistent practice in 2023. The passenger ferry operation offers this flexibility and allows OSTC to readily recruit and retain licenced seafarers (notwithstanding the global shortage of qualified labour).

OSTC has a complex working environment for developing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures. Not only is communication developed without a Human Resources Information System (HRIS) to support decision making, but it is also done without an employee intranet as a delivery mechanism.

Human Resources is currently compiling a framework through which to understand the current status of the policy environment which includes:

- Four active ferries, five terminals, domestic and international water voyages
- Two unions and five collective agreements
- Year-round and seasonal employees in both head office and all terminal locations
- Seasonal employment includes union and non-union and employment terms vary from 2.5 months to 6 months
- Hourly and salaried employees
- Multiple benefit programs (e.g., union programs, OSTC)

In 2023, OSTC began the development and implementation of policies with the introduction of three mandatory policies (Code of Conduct, Harassment, Conflict of Interest and Declaration of Interest) under the Ontario government public sector framework. The continued rollout of these policies (including training as required) will continue this year.

At this time, the strategy is to continue the implementation of these policies across the organization. The development of an employee intranet for ensuring access to company information is proposed.

12. Performance Measures

Performance measures and targets have been established only for those areas in which the company and its personnel can have an influence. For example, the company cannot influence the weather, however the weather can have an influence on the company’s performance. OSTC will continue to work with the ministry to refine its performance measures through subsequent business planning processes.

12.1 Public Performance Measures

Customer Satisfaction

Goals/Outcomes	Measures	Targets/Standards	2023-24 Commitments
Customers are satisfied with the quality of service provided on the ship and on the dock	Customer surveys	95% satisfaction level as minimum standard	Conduct real-time surveys on vessels and maintain a minimum customer satisfaction level of 95%

Customer Complaint Resolution

Goals/Outcomes	Measures	Targets/Standards	2023-24 Commitments
Customer complaints are responded to in writing, within five working days of the complaint	Average response time for complaint resolution	Average response time of no more than 5 working days	Investigate and respond to customer complaints in writing, within 5 working days

Mechanical Downtime

Goals/Outcomes	Measures	Targets/Standards	2023-24 Commitments
No lost operating time resulting from preventable mechanical failures	Vessel Log Sheets	Zero lost days resulting from preventable mechanical problems	Adhere to preventative maintenance program to ensure service is not disrupted due to mechanical failure

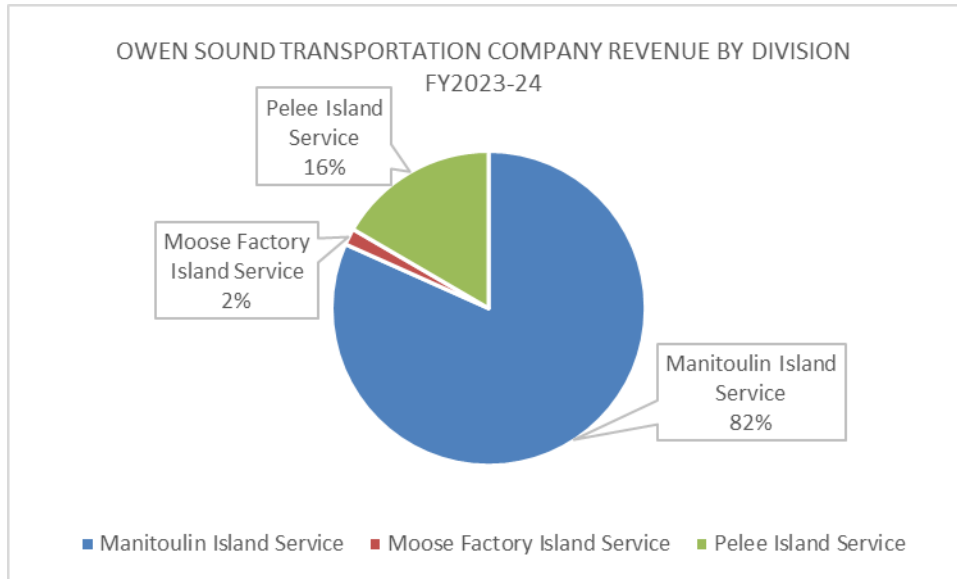
13. Financial Profile

13.1 Operating Budget Summary

The 2023-24 to 2025-26 Operating Requirement

SUMMARY OPERATING BUDGET FY2023-24 TO FY2025-26			
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
	\$000s	\$000s	\$000s
Revenue			
Passenger	2,619	2,697	2,777
Vehicles and freight	3,515	3,616	3,721
Other	1,470	1,037	1,087
	7,604	7,350	7,585
Expenses (for funding purposes)			
Labour & Benefits	7,064	7,417	7,788
Repairs & Maintenance	1,760	1,809	1,859
Fuel	1,833	1,932	2,036
Services	1,071	1,125	1,180
Other	2,539	2,687	2,842
	14,267	14,970	15,705
Total Operating Subsidy Requirement	- 6,663	- 7,620	- 8,120
Expenses not included in funding calculation			
Amortization	1,260	1,300	1,350
Changes to Future employment benefit liability	302	314	320
	1,562	1,614	1,670

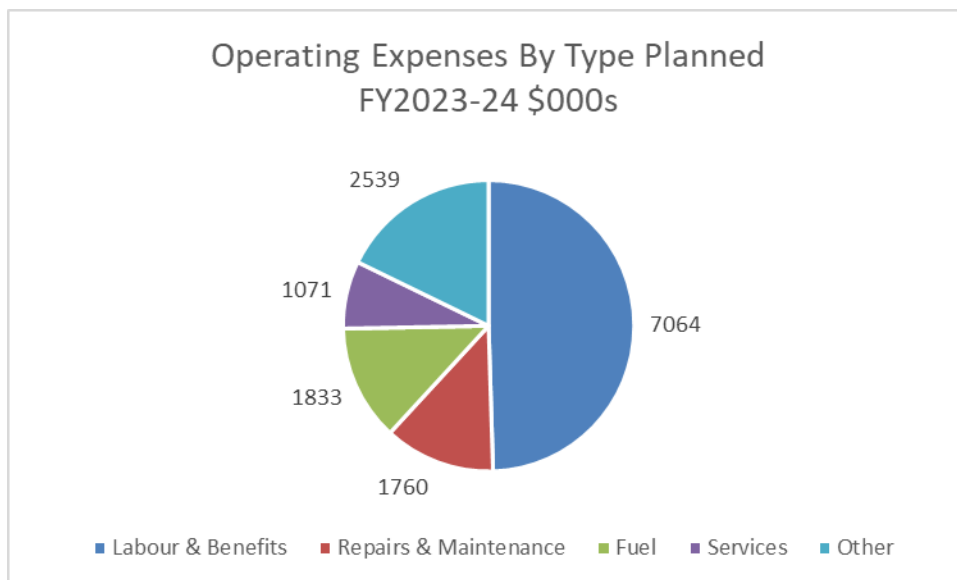
Owen Sound Transportation Revenues by Division



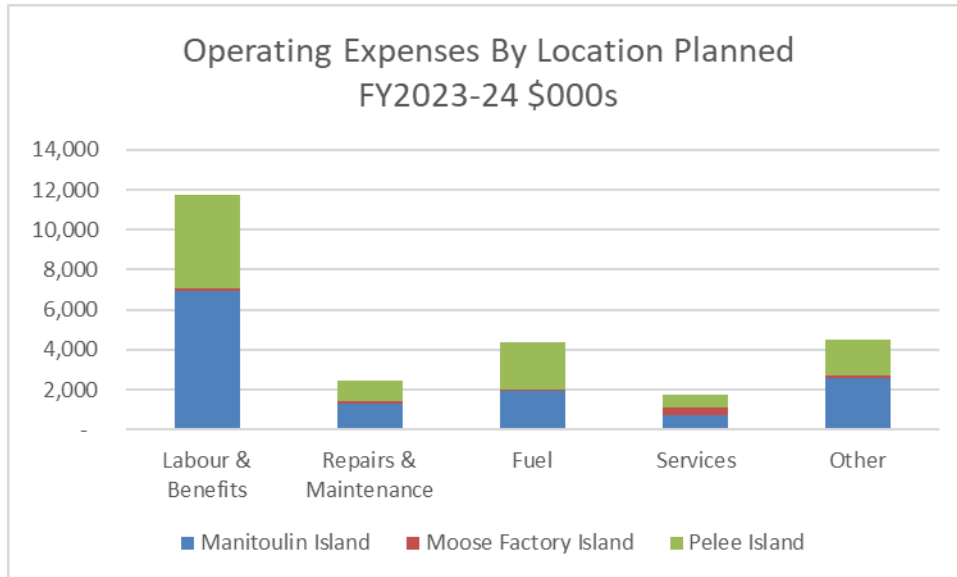
Revenues have been materially impacted by the pandemic, both in terms of reduced capacity (fewer trips), and reduced passengers and vehicles per trip. This plan provides for the capacity to remain at its 2022-23 levels. However, revenues for the Manitoulin Island Service are anticipated to increase by 5.4% in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23, mainly as a result of increased passengers and ancillary revenues, as fares will remain the same as in 2022-23. The marketing plan will be updated in 2023-24, with proposed fare structure changes and potential fare increases to be developed for subsequent years.

The Moose Factory Island Service and Pelee Island Service revenues are expected to be unchanged year over year.

Owen Sound Transportation Expenses



In 2023-24, Labour and Benefits represent approximately 50% of total expenses (excluding amortization), followed by Fuel – 13%, Repairs and Maintenance – 12%, Services – 8%, and Other (utilities, operating supplies and miscellaneous) – 18%.



The Manitoulin Island Service, which includes the head office of OSTC, has the majority of each expense. However, for fuel, the Pelee Island Service has increased costs due to the longer season and distances involved. As the Pelee Island Service costs are directly funded through the contract for services, these amounts are netted in **OSTC's** operating budget.

14. Information Technology (IT)/Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) Plan

OSTC has contracted an outside service provider to supply maintenance, support and security for the IT platform. However, the agency is working to recruit an Owen Sound-based IM/IT/Systems position to provide organization-wide IT support, assist with implementing new systems, and maintaining the specialized systems used for operations. The position would support IT/communications onboard the vessels and at the terminals.

15. Initiatives Involving Third Parties

15.1 Strategic Alliances

OSTC is a member of the Canadian Ferry Association, the Canadian Passenger Vessel Association, the Passenger Vessel Association in the USA, and Interferry. The first two groups are exclusively Canadian operators who work with Transport Canada Marine Safety regarding application of regulatory reform in the passenger ship industry. OSTC also actively participates in Regulator and Industry forums such as CMAC (Canadian Marine Advisory Council) and the Great Lakes Marine Advisory Board (GLMAB).

OSTC is a supporter of the marine training program at Georgian College in Owen Sound, Ontario. OSTC employs cadets of the college on the MS *Chi-Cheemaun* and the MV *Pelee Islander II*.

15.2 Community Partnerships

Through the ferry service’s community advisory committees and regional tourism partnerships, OSTC partners with the communities on each end of the ferry route to jointly promote the opportunities of each region, using the ferry for access.

OSTC has historically been engaged with the members of the communities it serves and plans to re-engage with local groups during the 2023 season. The following provides a historical perspective of community involvement and areas identified for planned re-engagement. In Tobermory, OSTC is a major financial partner in the community’s water and sewage systems; it sponsors “Big Canoe Weekend” and provides sponsorship for items such as the highway speed reminder sign and permanent Christmas light fixtures and Canada Day celebrations. In South Baymouth, OSTC houses the water intake and treatment facility for the Township of Tehkummah and is a sponsor of community association projects including outdoor benches. OSTC is a major opening night participant in the Festival of Northern Lights and provides the ship to the Blue Water Regional Science and Technology Fair committee to use for special events during the School Board Wide Regional Science Fair.

The company owns the ferry/landing craft *Niska* and partners with the economic development arm of Moose Cree First Nation to carry passengers and freight from the island to Moosonee in operating months (typically June through late September).

15.3 Contracting Out

Vessel and facility maintenance that exceeds the ability of OSTC employees, or is unique or specialized, is contracted out as required. All contractors are secured through the approved purchasing and tendering policy.

15.4 External Clients

OSTC’s external customers include contract clients (MTO), the communities on Manitoulin Island and the Bruce Peninsula, the communities of Moosonee and Moose Factory Island, and all users of the ferry services.

OSTC obtains operational feedback from all user groups either through public forum (community advisory groups), customer survey cards and verbal or written correspondence. OSTC provides operational and financial reports to contract clients in compliance with the schedules contained within the agreements.

16. Communications Plan

OSTC communications are governed by the MOU between OSTC and the government. The President and CEO of OSTC collaborates with the Board Chair and MTO on the coordination of public communications and media initiatives.

16.1 Communications Scenarios

- Changes to ferry service; cancelled or delayed sailings – external users of the service

- Safety messages on board the vessel and at the terminal facilities
- Sales and Marketing messages – external users of the service
- Decision making and recommendations – internal operations personnel
- Accidents that result in material damage or injury to persons

16.2 Audiences

- Reserved and non-reserved customers (general traveling public)
- Public at-large
- OSTC Board of Directors, Ministries and agency employees
- Local community and business leaders; Ferry Service Advisory Committee
- Media outlets

16.3 Communication Tactics by Objective

- Customer Notifications of Major Service Delays: radio, newspaper, and television and website news outlets, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram; telephone; highway signs SMS OPT-IN service and direct SMS messaging to impacted reservation holders
- Sales and Advertising: radio and television, website, newspaper, travel guides, highway signs, direct sales literature, travel shows, travel agencies, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for annual and ongoing sales and advertising

16.4 Communications Budget and Evaluation Plan

OSTC’s marketing and communication activities were largely suspended between 2020 and 2022. In 2023, OSTC plans to revisit a more fulsome approach to marketing and communications.

There is low awareness of ferry services offered in the province and the advertising done by OSTC is primarily used to raise awareness of the Manitoulin Island service to those outside our operating area. OSTC received market feasibility study recommendations to partake in advertising. This recommendation was put into action to remedy years of ridership decline. In-market advertising began in 2015 and was fine-tuned and measured in the years prior to the pandemic. OSTC is using tools such as BOOKIT and the contact centre software to better track advertising outputs. A few advertising wins include:

Targeted marketing in Mandarin resulted in a large influx of Asian Canadian travellers in following seasons. Additional proof points include:

- Marketing in GO Transit vehicles increased travellers from the postal codes along GO routes
- Advertising in Kitchener increased travellers from the Kitchener-Waterloo area

Historically, OSTC utilized its annual sales, marketing and communications budget for the purchase of radio, print media, billboard advertising, website development, and the production of the annual report. Annual report costs are now minimal with changes to regulations.

OSTC continues to use Google Analytics on its company website to get a better understanding of online traffic origins. In previous years, the largest proportion of new visits to the website originated from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). OSTC will continue to use Google Analytics and similar tools to monitor the effectiveness of marketing investments and social media. OSTC is undertaking an audience audit to determine whether the tactics we are using to communicate with our existing audience and the tactics used to acquire customer conversions are appropriate and effective.

16.5 Complaint Response Mechanism & Process

OSTC's procedure for handling of customer complaints regarding service includes:

On-site and in-person: Front line managers and supervisors are empowered to resolve customer complaints in the moment.

By letter or email: Letters of complaint are responded to in writing, typically within five working days of receipt, depending on the complexity of the investigation into the complaint, or complaints.

By telephone: Complaint calls are referred to the appropriate Manager, then Director or CEO for response if needed. A follow-up letter is sent if the customer provides a mailing address.

Changes to procedures that arise from a complaint resolution are implemented, and employees are trained accordingly at the earliest possible time, without causing disruption to the ferry services.