

# 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Prepared for

## Membership of the Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association

Version 1.0

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## 1.0 Association History Brief

The Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association was formed in 1999 to serve as one organization representing all the various interests of the onsite wastewater industry. The objectives of the association were to act as a liaison with government, educate the public, provide a forum for all industry stakeholders and to establish installation and maintenance standards. Since then, the association has grown in the scope of its activities, its membership and in its influence.

OOWA has been and continues to be governed by a proactive volunteer board of directors comprised of representatives from multiple disciplines in the industry. Because of the contributions of these volunteers, the organization's capacity to serve as a valuable resource for the industry has increased. Over the years the association has moved from a strictly volunteer effort to having salaried staff that support and carry out daily operations and programming activities that help achieve the goals determined by both its working committees and its board of directors.

OOWA's Annual Convention and Expo has now become a flagship industry event that provides training and important regulatory updates. OOWA's guidance documents series, its newsletters and other information products are now reliable resources for professionals. In addition to providing valuable products and services to our members, OOWA leads discussions with government and industry stakeholders on emerging issues that have direct impacts on our shared industry.

The Association is the front line of support for permanent onsite and decentralized wastewater systems in Ontario thus fulfilling the vision set out by its founding members. The following documents how OOWA will continue to serve its members for the next five years.

## 2.0 Mission, Vision and Core Values

### 2.1 OOWA Mission Statement

To strengthen and reinforce the benefits and value of the onsite and decentralized wastewater industry in Ontario through education, member engagement and sound policies & practices.

### 2.2 OOWA Vision Statement

To be the driving force and leading source of knowledgeable professional expertise for the onsite and decentralized wastewater industry in Ontario.

### 2.3 OOWA Core Value Statements

#### **Environmental Preservation:**

Professional onsite and decentralized wastewater management is a means to preserve our precious natural resources.

**Economic Sustainability:**

Onsite and decentralized wastewater management provides permanent, cost effective servicing solutions for communities to grow responsibly.

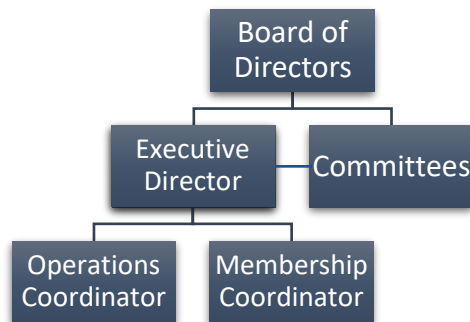
**Healthy Society:**

Effective onsite and decentralized wastewater management is vital to the protection of public health, lifestyle and the enjoyment of water resources.

## 3.0 Organizational Overview

### 3.1 Governance Model

OOWA is a not-for-profit, membership-based organization directed by an elected volunteer board of directors which in turn is governed by established and accepted by-laws. Salaried staff provide support to the board and a number of working committees and also perform daily operational tasks.



### 3.2 Committees

The OOWA committees have been established to develop and implement programs, events, relationships, technical review and policies & procedure that will benefit the OOWA membership. OOWA members are encouraged to actively participate in the development and growth of the association by volunteering their talents and time in the committee of their interest. Meetings will be conducted monthly, or as needed, by video conference with the committee members.

The committee chairs are responsible to provide the Board of Directors a report pertaining to their committee meetings and suggested changes for improving member information and benefits. Copies of reports are to be made available at monthly board meetings. Each committee will develop an annual work plan that outlines its identified objectives to achieve in that year. An accompanying action plan will be drafted in conjunction outlining specific activities that will ensure the committee's efforts are focused on and achieve the objectives.

Each committee will receive a budgeted amount in the general budget, which will be approved at the beginning of the year. Committee chairs are responsible for funds expended to their accounts.

### 3.2.01 Finance

The Finance Committee is responsible for oversight of all financial activity including development of the annual budget, coordinating income tax returns and auditing procedures, financial procedure/policy development as well as other financial initiatives which may arise. The committee is populated by each committee chair/co-chair. The Finance Committee chairperson is the Treasurer of the Association who will provide monthly updates to the board of the financial status and activities of the Association.

### 3.2.02 External Relations

The External Relations Committee develops and maintains active relationships with relevant representatives of provincial governments, agencies, industry organizations, and partner organizations. The goal is to nurture channels of communication to create opportunities for collaboration that are consistent with the strategic plan and board directives.

### 3.2.03 Membership Services

The Membership Services Committee's purpose is to ensure value for members as evidenced in retention and attraction. This is achieved through member outreach & connection, sourcing of valuable membership benefits, the development & implementation of member focused programs, and reviewing the membership categories & annual rates.

### 3.2.04 Onsite Technical

The Onsite Technical Committee evaluates and recommends changes to existing codes, guidance and other related rules and regulations to improve the technical aspects of design, installation, service and maintenance for the onsite and decentralized wastewater industry. This also includes the creation of guidance documents to support our industry.

### 3.2.05 Governance

The Governance Committee's mandate is to assist the Board of Directors in matters of policies and procedure in order to make effective decisions that will have a positive impact on the association, and to help make and change policy with respect to by-law issues within the organization, while protecting the best interest of OOWA and its members. The Governance Committee chairperson is the Secretary of the Association who will provide monthly updates to the board of the activities of the committee.

### 3.2.06 Professional Development

The key focus of the Professional Development Committee is to expand the abilities of OOWA members. The committee provides ongoing member support through the creation and sourcing of training courses, the Professional In-Development Program, Registered Professional Program, and other training initiatives. These services are designed to anticipate, facilitate and coordinate the ongoing training needs of our industry.

### 3.2.07 Events

The Events Committee is responsible for the development, coordination, and delivery of all outreach and events including, but not limited to, the annual conference and exhibition, regional meetings, symposiums, and other OOWA led events which may arise.

### 3.2.08 Communications

The mandate of the Communications Committee is to gather and produce content for OOWA's communication streams including newsletters, e-bulletins, website, and social media. It also develops digital content such as training, instructional, and informational videos. The committee is responsible for developing advertising revenues, editorial policies, and efficacy in the delivery of communications.

### 3.2.09 New Initiatives

The New Initiatives Committee provides a dedicated forum for generating and evaluating new initiatives and projects that align with OOWA's strategic plan. The primary objective of the Committee is to engage in a systematic and collaborative process to identify innovative initiatives that will contribute to the growth, development, and impact of OOWA. The Committee will evaluate potential projects, considering their feasibility, their alignment with OOWA's mission, anticipated outcomes, resource requirements, and potential risks.

## 4.0 Areas of Focus

### 4.1 Education

We are committed to advancing the education and career development of those in the onsite sewage industry by fostering strong partnerships and delivering impactful learning opportunities.

#### Goals:

- Collaborate with government and key stakeholders to support ongoing professional development and establish consistent industry standards.
- Partner with academic institutions to promote career pathways, helping to attract and prepare the next generation of professionals in response to a retiring workforce.
- Provide high-quality education and training programs that support lifelong learning, enhance technical proficiency, and uphold excellence in onsite sewage system design, installation, and maintenance.
- Continue to support our Education Partners by promoting diverse opportunities for industry specific education and training.

#### Key Objectives:

- Develop training for installers, ensuring alignment with current industry standards and workforce needs.
- Create and deliver training courses that support continuous development for all members, at all career stages.
- Launch a structured mentorship program to facilitate knowledge transfer and professional growth for emerging professionals.
- Increase grassroots youth education and engagement to foster early interest in onsite wastewater careers.

### 4.2 Member Engagement

Our strength lies in a diverse, inclusive, and engaged community. We aim to build and maintain meaningful connections across the industry and foster a culture of collaboration, representation, and shared value.

**Goals:**

- Build and sustain a diverse and engaged membership that reflects all regions of the province, and disciplines of the industry.
- Promote province wide representation through events and initiatives that support members in all regions.
- Champion excellence and integrity of the industry's professional conduct, technical practice, and environmental responsibility.
- Encourage knowledge sharing by creating spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and co-creation of solutions to shared challenges.

**Key Objectives:**

- Grow and engage a diverse volunteer network to support the association's initiatives and increase member involvement.
- Expand the Emerging Professionals program to develop future leaders and ensure long-term vitality of the industry.
- Establish and empower regional working groups to address local needs and improve regional engagement.
- Launch targeted membership campaigns to attract a broad cross-section of professionals and strengthen the association's reach and influence.

### 4.3 Industry Leadership

OOWA leads by example, leveraging partnerships, resources, and expertise to shape a resilient, progressive industry rooted in excellence and sustainability.

**Goals:**

- Strengthen collaboration with government and regulators to ensure sound, consistent policies and effective governance.
- Position OOWA as a trusted voice by utilizing member expertise to elevate best practices and promote innovation.
- Influence the development of practical, evidence based regulations that support sustainability and protect the environment and public health.
- Provide credible insights and forward looking research to inform sound decision making and policy development.
- Gather diverse perspectives to drive collective action on the most pressing issues facing the industry.

**Key Objectives:**

- Build strategic alliances with other associations nationwide on shared priorities and amplify the industry's collective voice.
- Advocate for the updating of codes and standards to reflect technological advancements and sustainability goals.
- Conduct and share industry research to guide policy and improve practices.

- Host events to foster collaboration and support the development of standardized, sustainable approaches to decentralized/communal wastewater systems.

#### 4.4 Public Awareness

Awareness and trust are key to the future of the onsite wastewater industry. Through education, we strengthen public understanding of its critical role in environmental protection and public health.

##### Goals:

- Promote the value of hiring qualified and registered professionals for the design, installation, and maintenance of onsite wastewater systems.
- Proactively educate the public on the importance of system maintenance and the role of trained professionals in protecting water quality and public health.
- Build strategic partnerships with aligned organizations to extend outreach and engage broader audiences.
- Collaborate with regulatory bodies to align messaging and share educational resources with the public and industry stakeholders.

##### Key Objectives:

- Develop and distribute property owner resources to improve understanding and care of onsite wastewater systems.
- Expand Septic Awareness Week through campaigns and community engagement initiatives.
- Deliver targeted communications and public events to raise awareness of the industry.

## 5.0 Moving Forward: Turning Vision into Action

The next five years offer an extraordinary opportunity for OOWA to strengthen our industry, elevate professional practice, and shape a more sustainable future for communities across Ontario. This Strategic Plan outlines clear priorities; education, member engagement, industry leadership, and public awareness, but it is our collective action that will bring these goals to life.

Each committee will translate this plan into concrete annual work plans, measurable outcomes, and coordinated efforts that support consistent standards, practical solutions, and meaningful progress. Strengthened partnerships with government, academic institutions, and industry organizations will help advance innovation and ensure that onsite wastewater management remains a trusted and essential part of Ontario's environmental infrastructure.

Moving forward, every OOWA member has a role in this shared vision. Whether you contribute technical expertise, mentor emerging professionals, support regional initiatives, or help educate the public, your efforts shape both our industry and the communities we serve.

Together, we can elevate our profession, build public trust, and cultivate sustainable, evidence based approaches to wastewater management. By combining our knowledge, passion, and collective voice, we are not only advancing an industry—we are safeguarding the health of our environment and our communities for generations to come.

The future is ours to build—let's build it together.