

# Sector Development Priorities for Ontario's Maple Syrup Industry

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# Executive Summary

Maple syrup production is an Ontario tradition with deep roots going back generations and spanning centuries. Yet despite this rich history and the fact that Ontario has more suitable maple stands than any other province or territory, the Ontario maple syrup sector is dwarfed by that of Quebec. Recently, Quebec has averaged roughly 90% of Canada's maple syrup output, whereas Ontario has contributed roughly 4%.

At the same time, the global maple industry is currently in a period of rapid growth, with a 6.2% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) predicted through to 2028. Competing jurisdictions like Quebec are calling for huge numbers of additional taps to be brought online. There is the opportunity to not only achieve rapid growth of Ontario's maple syrup sector, but increase Ontario's relative market share. The prize for successful support of the Ontario maple syrup sector is substantial, with the potential to double or quadruple the sector over the next ten years, resulting in annual farm gate receipts of between \$50M and \$100M.

## The Ontario Maple Syrup Sector

Ontario maple syrup production has one foot firmly rooted in the multi-generational family operations that traditionally dominated the sector, and the other in the emergence of large-scale operations that are orders of magnitude larger than the many smaller scale operations that still predominate. There are roughly 3,000 maple syrup operations in Ontario, representing approximately two million taps, with production concentrated south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. There are wide variances in the distribution of producers and the size of operations across the province.

Farm gate cash receipts of \$25.8 million were generated in 2020. OMAFRA calculations suggest that about 1,600 direct jobs and \$61 million in direct gross domestic product (GDP) can be attributed to the Maple products industry value chain (farm, processing and retail) in 2019.

## The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association

The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association (OMSPA) was launched in 1966 to represent the collective interests of Ontario maple syrup producers. From the outset it has been a volunteer-based organization, with progress driven by the countless hours contributed by its members. OMSPA is staffed by an Executive Director (half time paid position), with a large Board of Directors and associated committees comprised of volunteer OMSPA members. As of 2022, OMSPA has 600 members and operated on an annual budget of roughly \$72K for core operations, and a further \$155K in government grants for strategic initiatives.

## Opportunity: The Future of the Sector

The global maple syrup market was worth US\$1.58 billion in 2022, up from US\$1.49 billion in 2021. Between 2022 and 2028 the maple syrup market is expected to grow at a predicted compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2% through to 2028, when the market is

estimated to reach US\$2.29 billion. As a general statement, while Canadian maple syrup exports have increased 60% over the past decade, growth is now slowing in Europe. In contrast, the Asian market is strong and growing. To meet strong continuing market growth, Quebec is rapidly bringing 7 million new taps online.

## Current Challenges and the Path Forward

The 2023-2028 strategic planning process undertaken by OMSPA identified the following suite of eight challenges to the growth and health of Ontario's maple syrup sector, and defined the following roles for government and industry in addressing these priority challenges.

### 1 – How to put more Ontario maple trees into production

Ontario has 4.1% of Canadian maple syrup production as of 2021, compared to Quebec's 89% of production. Yet Ontario has 1.8 million hectares of maple-dominant stands, almost triple the amount found in Quebec. If Ontario increases the percentage of available maples that are tapped from the current 0.04% to 0.1% this would bring an additional 1.8 million taps online, expanding Ontario production by almost 100%.

Putting more trees into production will require 1) identifying areas of maple suitable for production, and 2) creating efficient and effective mechanisms to allow producers to access these maple stands once identified.

#### **The Role of Government**

Government has a central role to play in:

1. The use of digital mapping to get a clear picture of the location and availability of untapped maple forest across Ontario.
2. Smoothing the pathways to accessing Crown land for maple syrup production.
3. Recognizing the sustainable use of forest resources for carbon sequestration.

#### **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

OMSPA is partnering with the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA) on a maple forest mapping initiative. OMSPA is further creating a Land Access Support Committee, tasked with supporting Ontario producers in bringing more trees into production.

### 2 – Accelerating challenges from climate change

Climate change is already profoundly affecting Ontario maple syrup production. Sugarbush health is being negatively impacted through increased native and exotic pests, increased frequency and severity of extreme climatic events, the potential for increased damage from spring frosts, and reduced winter snowpack. The timing of maple season is also shifting earlier, while becoming shorter and more unpredictable. And ultimately, sugar maple growth will shrink across southern Ontario, while expanding the range of maples northward.

#### **The Role of Government**

Government has an essential role in supporting the development of detailed regional understandings of the impacts of climate change and Ontario-focused educational and training resources on climate change mitigation for Ontario producers. The development of

a policy instrument that incentivizes environmental services that deliver carbon sequestration would also be of significant value to Ontario's maple syrup sector.

### **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

OMSPA's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan calls for the creation of the Maple Applied Research & Training (MART) Centre to provide essential information, training, and education to Ontario producers. Issues related to challenges posed by climate change would be a high priority for the MART Centre. OMSPA has also prioritized the development of a standardized set of carbon accounting practices for maple syrup production, with the twin goals of accelerating government recognition and promoting increased adoption of carbon efficient maple syrup production methods and technologies.

## **3 – Protecting and developing the market for Ontario maple syrup**

Ontario producers have been effective at commanding superior prices for Ontario maple syrup sold through their own retail efforts. However, in contrast to retail sales, the bulk market for maple syrup in Canada is dominated by Quebec due to their overwhelming market share. The challenge for Ontario is how to develop a domestic bulk maple syrup value chain that allows for bulk Ontario maple syrup to be marketed as a distinct product, with the potential to command a premium price when compared to bulk purchase options from Quebec.

### **The Role of Government**

Government has a central role in generating a better understanding of the Ontario market for maple syrup, providing the regulatory support for an industry focus on quality assurance, supporting an industry-led marketing and branding campaign, and supporting the creation of a bulk market for Ontario maple syrup.

### **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the development and launch of a comprehensive provincial marketing/branding campaign. OMSPA will be considering two mechanisms for creating a bulk market for Ontario maple syrup: 1) creating a broker service, allowing packers to easily source large quantities of Ontario bulk syrup, and/or 2) supporting the launch of additional bottling capacity.

## **4 – Looming human resource challenges**

There are multiple factors that are combining to create a looming human resources challenge in the Ontario maple syrup sector. There is a lack of training available in Ontario, with no institutions offering any formal courses or training in maple syrup production. At the same time, the existing base of producers is trending older and older, with only 15% of members of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association under the age of 45, and 37% over the age of 65. Closely associated with the risk posed by an aging base of Ontario producers are the challenges in engaging a new, younger generation of producers. While other maple syrup producing jurisdictions have active programs and resources to attract and support new young producers, and other Ontario producers' associations have well developed programs targeting younger producers such as the Ontario Beef Youth Alliance, there are no comparable programs in place for Ontario's maple syrup sector.

## **The Role of Government**

Government can play an important role in developing a better understanding of the existing demographic forces at work, and what the best strategies are for attracting and developing the required workforce. Support for the proposed Maple Applied Research & Technology (MART) Centre is an important step in putting in place the training resources needed.

## **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

The Ontario Maple Producers' Association has identified the lack of young newcomers as one of the priority issues to be addressed over the next five years. OMSPA's 2023 - 2028 strategic plan further emphasizes the need for significantly increased training capacity, with the potential to realize a full diploma-level program in maple production in partnership with an established post-secondary institution.

## **5 – No home-grown extension and research capacity**

There is significant training and research focused on maple syrup production being undertaken in Quebec, Vermont, and New York. There is no equivalent capacity in Ontario. Because of the extensive research being undertaken and training resources being developed in these other jurisdictions, Ontario does not need to duplicate these efforts. Instead, we should capitalize on these external resources to the full extent possible, focusing on identifying the most relevant of these resources for Ontario, and then securing, adapting, and delivering these resources to Ontario producers.

## **The Role of Government**

There is an important role for Government in supporting the development and launch of an Ontario research/training centre focused on the maple syrup industry – the MART Centre (see immediately below).

## **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the development of the Maple Applied Research & Training (MART) Centre, to deliver high quality training and educational resources, while promoting and translating research on cutting edge issues and technologies of relevance to Ontario producers. The MART Centre, working directly with OMSPA staff and the volunteers at OMSPA Locals across the province, will make training and resources locally available to Ontario producers.

## **6 – Quality assurance for a premium product**

To maintain its current premium retail pricing, the strong association of Ontario maple syrup with the highest quality is essential. However, the Ontario government's already limited expertise in regulatory enforcement has been almost entirely eliminated. In addition, there are ongoing challenges in keeping Ontario producers focused on quality assurance. These challenges include a lack of resources to develop and communicate best practices in quality assurance to producers, and the need for general education of Ontario producers as to the critical importance of quality assurance to the future of the Ontario maple syrup brand.

## **The Role of Government**

The MART Centre will play a crucial role in developing quality assurance and food safety resources and best practices, and providing these resources to Ontario producers through

training and other support mechanisms. Support for the MART Centre will directly benefit quality assurance in Ontario maple syrup production. In addition, the Ontario Government used to have a small regulatory team that was knowledgeable about maple syrup production, but this expertise is no longer with government. It is essential that this knowledge be re-developed within OMAFRA, to allow effective ongoing regulatory engagement with the sector.

### **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for developing updated and effective quality assurance training and resources for OMSPA members through the proposed Maple Applied Research & Training (MART) Centre, the ongoing promotion of the importance of quality assurance within Ontario producers, and developing a comprehensive marketing and branding campaign that differentiates Ontario maple syrup on quality.

## **7 – The sustainability and effectiveness of OMSPA**

For over 50 years, the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association (OMSPA) has brought together and supported Ontario's maple syrup producers. Historically, OMSPA has been built and has operated due to an immense amount of volunteer commitment from its members. Despite its decades of effective sectoral stewardship, OMSPA is facing a number of challenges to its long-term sustainability, including the need to put in place more professional organizational capacity than the current 0.5 FTE allows, the fact that its leadership is mostly in their sixties and seventies, the need to update governance to embrace current best practices, and the need to develop sustainable funding streams.

### **The Role of Government**

With OMSPA playing a central role in supporting the growth and health of Ontario maple syrup production, increased core funding is essential to support a dynamic and effective OMSPA.

### **The Role of Industry (OMSPA)**

OMSPA is focused on improving and strengthening through a reworked governance structure that conforms with current best practices, the refocusing and strengthening of OMSPA's Locals as key links with producers, the evaluation and refocusing of services being offered to members, expanding core professional staff from 0.5 FTE to at least 2 FTE, and developing new streams of sustainable funding.

## **8 – The need for quality industry data**

Strategic decision making, sectoral or otherwise, is only as good as the information that informs the decision-making process. While Ontario has decent sectoral data on Ontario's maple syrup sector as compared to other maple syrup producing jurisdictions, with credit due to OMAFRA's Chief Economist, there is a general lack of comprehensive sectoral data on maple syrup production, whether for Ontario or elsewhere. This lack of effective sectoral data is a challenge for charting an optimum path forward for Ontario's maple syrup sector, from producers through to OMSPA and to the Ontario government itself.



## The Role of Government

OMAFRA and the Federal Government should work closely with OMSPA to both ensure that the right data is being collected, and to rationalize data collection, avoiding overlap for maximum efficiency.

## The Role of Industry (OMSPA)

There is a crucial role for OMSPA in identifying, collecting, and maintaining sectoral data, with further responsibility for analysis, providing insights of value both to producers and to government. OMSPA's internal member surveys are an invaluable source of sectoral data that is otherwise unavailable, and care needs to be taken in maximizing the effectiveness of this survey while minimizing its burden on producers.

## Alignment with Government Priorities

In 2021 the Guelph Statement was released, a joint statement of all provinces, territories, and the federal government that presents a shared vision for Canadian agriculture in 2028 and a shared suite of agricultural policy priorities. It is striking how aligned the priorities of Ontario's maple syrup sector are with the five priority areas identified in the Guelph Statement:

1. Tackling **climate change and environmental protection**
2. Continued and targeted investments in **science, research, and innovation**
3. Supporting sustainable agriculture and economic growth by creating the conditions for Canadian businesses to meet evolving challenges of the interconnected **domestic and global marketplace**
4. Building **sector capacity** and **growth** through realizing the potential of value added agri-food and agri-products
5. Enhancing **resiliency** to anticipate, mitigate and respond to risks, including a robust suite of Business Risk Management programs

## Impact

When contemplating the impact that effective sectoral support will have on the Ontario maple syrup sector, and Ontario as a whole, two scenarios are contemplated:

**Scenario 1 – Ontario producers maintain their market share** in the face of a rapidly increasing market and ever-increasing competitive pressures from Quebec and other jurisdictions, resulting in a doubling of annual farm gate receipts in roughly ten years to \$53 million per year.

**Scenario 2 – Ontario producers double their market share**, successfully increasing the awareness of Ontario consumers of the superior quality and rich history of locally produced maple syrup, resulting in a sector that is generating farm gate receipts in excess of \$100 million per year within the next decade.

Under both these scenarios, the increased revenue to maple syrup producers across the province generates significant follow-on benefits, including increased employment and tax

base in rural Ontario, increased income streams for Ontario farms, and the sustainable, high-value use of Ontario's natural resources.

# A – Introduction

Maple syrup has been produced in Ontario for hundreds of years. There are sugar bushes across the province that have been tapped continuously by the same family for over a century. For many, maple syrup is woven into the fabric of culinary life in Ontario.

While Ontario has swathes of maple stands in large bands across the province, our home-grown sector has been dwarfed by that of Quebec. Quebec producers dominate Canadian and international production, despite Ontario having more suitable maple trees. Ontario's production was slightly over 4% of that of Quebec's in 2021.

The global maple syrup industry is currently in a period of rapid growth, with strong market expansion predicted for the foreseeable future. Competing jurisdictions like Quebec are calling for huge numbers of additional taps to be brought online.

This document outlines the priority areas of action for the Ontario maple sector, examining the challenges facing the sector, and outlining a path forward that supports Ontario producers on capitalizing on market opportunity to dramatically increase Ontario maple syrup production. A partnership between the Ontario Government, the Federal Government, and the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association (OMSPA) is presented, focused on systematically addressing the challenges restricting rapid sectoral growth.

The prize for successful support of the Ontario maple syrup sector is substantial, with the potential to double or quadruple the sector over the next ten years, resulting in annual farm gate receipts of between \$50M and \$100M.

This document first provides an overview of the sector, looking at predicted growth. The primary challenges to sectoral growth are then identified. The path forward is presented as a partnership between OMSPA and the Ontario and Federal Governments to address each of these challenges. The strong intersection between this sector development plan and Ontario and Federal agricultural priorities is discussed, and then a summary of the potential impact of successful support for Ontario's maple syrup sector is provided. To conclude, next steps are discussed.

## About OMSPA's strategic planning process

This sectoral strategy was developed as a capstone to OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic planning process. OMSPA used the 2023-2028 strategic planning cycle to undertake a detailed examination of the state of OMSPA, the changing shape of maple syrup production in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the future of Ontario maple syrup production. This process involved the participation of over 20% of OMSPA's members in ten working groups conducting research and analysis into issues of critical importance to OMSPA members. The submissions of these ten working groups are well worth reading, and can be accessed here: <https://www.omspa.ca/working-group-reports>.

The inputs from these working groups were combined with input obtained through member engagement activities to develop a draft strategic plan for OMSPA for the period 2023-2028. This draft strategic plan was circulated to all OMSPA members, with several forums provided to directly engage Ontario producers on this plan. This member input resulted in a number of revisions, with the final draft circulated to members and ratified by OMSPA's board in February of 2023. OMSPA's strategic plan received 98% support from membership, and

100% support from the OMSPA board. OMSPA's strategic plan for 2023-2028 can be found here: <https://www.omspa.ca/strategic-plan-final>.

The final phase of OMSPA's strategic planning process was the development of this sector development strategy.

## B – Sector Overview

Ontario has a rich history of maple syrup production extending back centuries. Maple syrup production today still has one foot firmly rooted in the multi-generational family operations that traditionally dominated the sector, and the other in the emergence of large-scale operations that are orders of magnitude larger than the many smaller scale operations that still predominate.

### Size and Geographic Distribution of Ontario's maple syrup sector

There are roughly 3,000 maple syrup operations in Ontario, representing approximately two million taps. Ontario maple production is concentrated south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. The following illustration maps the relative number of members of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association by geographic area, noting that the number of members does not necessarily correlate with the number of trees being tapped. For example, the Algoma region has a small number of producers who have very large operations, whereas other regions have large numbers of producers with much smaller operations.

**Figure 1: The geographical concentration of OMSPA members in Ontario**

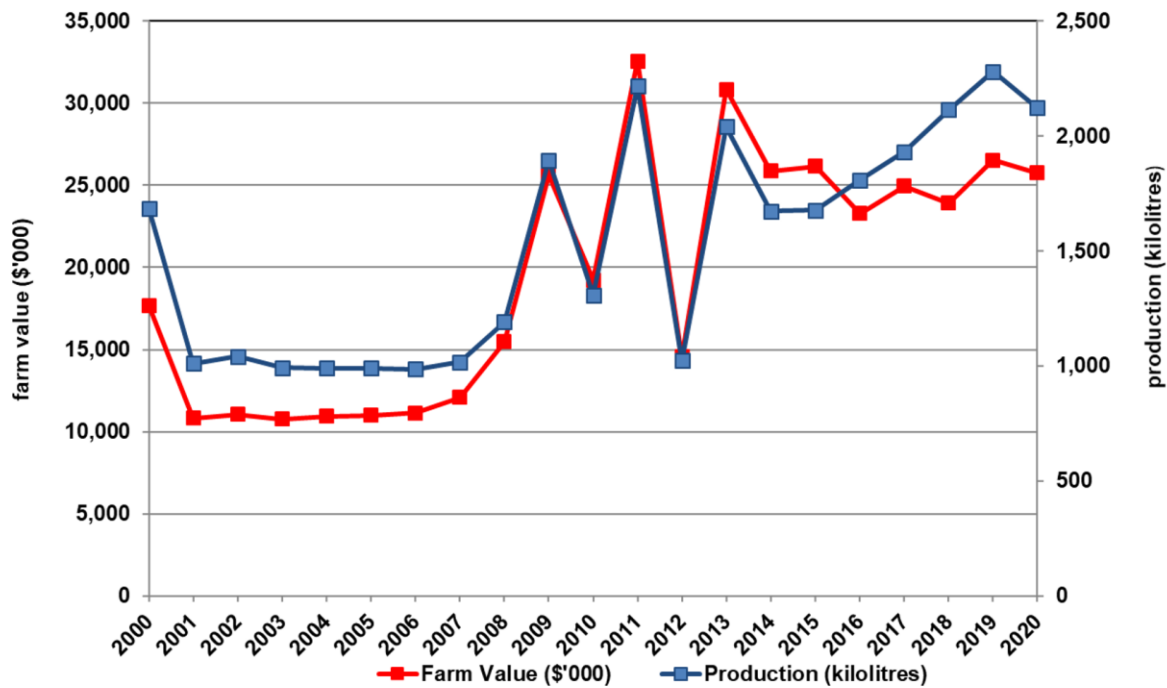


There are wide variances in the distribution of producers and the size of operations across the province. OMPSA is organized regionally into “Locals”. Figures 3 and 4 on the following page provide the total number of taps and the total number of members in each of OMPSA’s Locals. It is evident that much of Ontario’s production is concentrated in three regions: Lanark, Wellington Waterloo and Algoma.

## Economic Impact

Farm gate cash receipts of \$25.8 million were generated in 2020. OMAFRA calculations suggest that about 1,600 direct jobs and \$61 million in direct gross domestic product (GDP) can be attributed to the Maple products industry value chain (farm, processing and retail) in 2019.

**Figure 2: Farm gate value and annual production of Ontario maple syrup<sup>1</sup>**

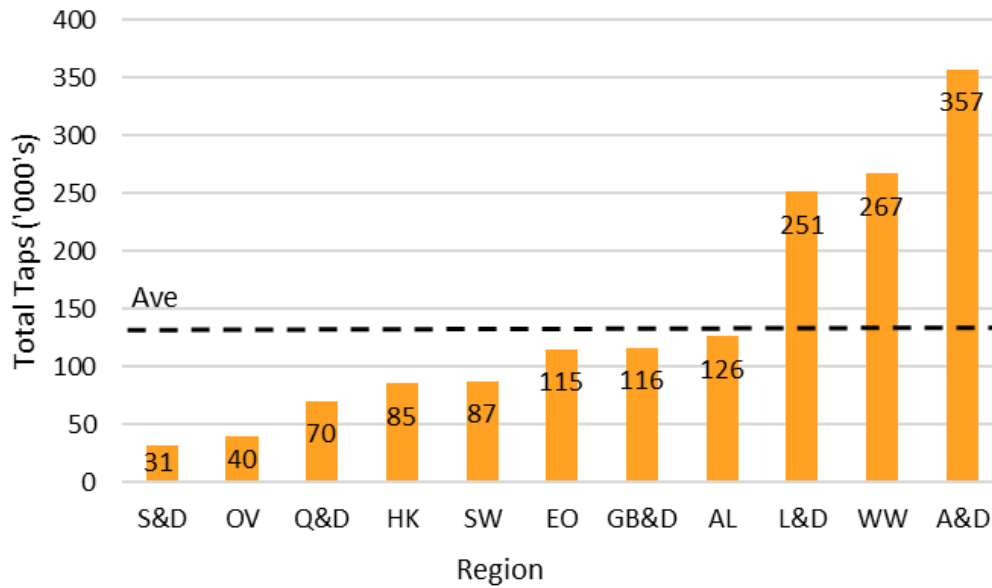


Overall, Canadian maple producers harvested a record-high 65,866 kilolitres of maple syrup in 2022, a 53.8% rise from 2021. In Ontario, historic high yields in northern parts of the province contributed to a 27.7% rise in production to 2,230 kilolitres.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Crops and horticulture, CANSIM table no. 32-10-0354-01

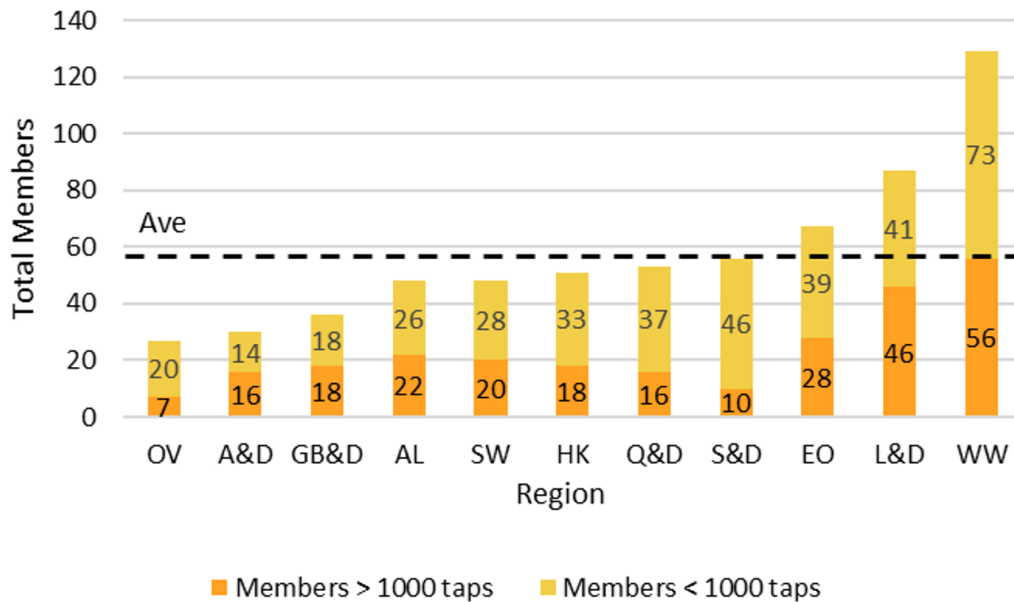
<sup>2</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221214/dq221214e-eng.htm>

**Figure 3: Number of taps per OMSPA Local**



Legend	
S&D – Simcoe and District	GB&D - Grey Bruce and District
OV – Ottawa Valley	AL – Algonquin
Q&D – Quinte and District	L&D – Lanark and District
HK – Haliburton & Kawarthas	WW – Wellington Waterloo
SW – Southwest	A&D – Algoma and District
EO – Eastern Ontario	

**Figure 4: Number of members per OMSPA Local**



## The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association (OMSPA)

The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association (OMSPA) was launched in 1966 to represent the collective interests of Ontario maple syrup producers. From the outset it has been a volunteer-based organization, with progress driven by the countless hours contributed by its members.

OMSPA is staffed by an Executive Director (half time paid position), with a large Board of Directors and associated committees comprised of volunteer OMSPA members. As of 2022 OMSPA has 600 members and operated on an annual budget of roughly \$72K for core operations, and a further \$155K in government grants for strategic initiatives. Before 2021 OMSPA was conducting business as usual, guided by the 2018-2023 strategic plan. Since 2021, OMSPA leadership has been focused first on identifying and engaging members with the skill sets needed by OMSPA to develop a comprehensive strategic plan based on deep analysis of the sector, and then on undertaking the strategic planning process itself.

## Ontario's maple syrup industry compared to other jurisdictions

Canada accounts for approximately 75% of the world's maple syrup production, with 89% of the Canadian production originating from Quebec, 7% from New Brunswick, 4% from Ontario, and less than 1% from Nova Scotia. The United States accounts for another 24% of global production, with Vermont producing 45% of US output, 19% from New York, and 14% from Maine.<sup>3</sup>

When OMSPA is compared to other maple syrup producing jurisdictions (excluding Quebec), our sector is middle of the pack. New Brunswick, New York and Vermont have all seen significant growth in their respective sectors recently, with all three of these jurisdictions either outproducing Ontario or are poised to do so. The Quebec sector is excluded from this comparison as it is so much larger than any other jurisdiction. Ontario does not have a clear path to becoming another Quebec, whereas Ontario does have a clear path to significantly expanding its market share as compared to other producing jurisdictions.

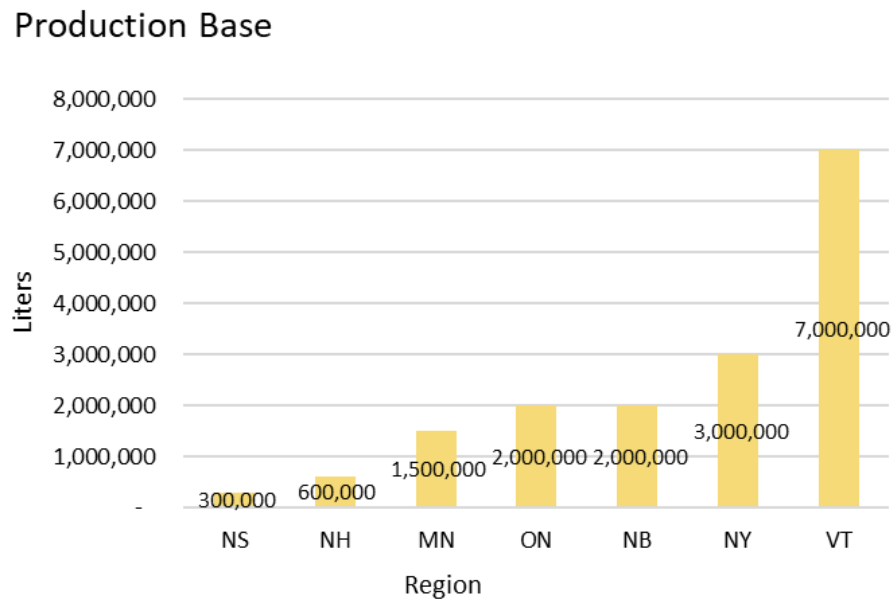
It is interesting to note that in 2019 Ontario and New Brunswick each had approximately 4% of Canadian output. By contrast, in 2021 Ontario maintained its output and relative market share at 4.1%. New Brunswick on the other hand increased its market share to 6.9% over the same period.<sup>4</sup> While a contributing factor to this dramatic shift in relative market share is the rapid expansion of maple syrup production in New Brunswick, the dominant factor was the significant variability in the 2021 maple season between regions, with Ontario and Quebec experiencing poor production, and New Brunswick benefiting from a strong sugar season.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/sector/horticulture/reports/statistical-overview-canadian-maple-industry-2021>

<sup>4</sup> <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/sector/horticulture/reports/statistical-overview-canadian-maple-industry-2021>

**Figure 5: Comparing the production of maple syrup producing jurisdictions, excluding Quebec (2020)**



Legend: NS – Nova Scotia, NH – New Hampshire, MN – Maine, ON – Ontario, NB – New Brunswick, NY – New York, VT - Vermont

When compared specifically to other Canadian maple producing jurisdictions, Ontario joins New Brunswick as the two biggest sectors outside of Quebec.

**Table 1: Ontario maple syrup production compared to other Canadian jurisdictions (thousands of gallons)<sup>5</sup>**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 % Share
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	48	43	55	70	56	0.4%
<b>New Brunswick</b>	528	551	361	598	561	3.9%
<b>Quebec</b>	11,185	11,493	8,914	12,033	13,210	92.4%
<b>Ontario</b>	398	425	465	502	467	3.3%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>12,160</b>	<b>12,512</b>	<b>9,796</b>	<b>13,204</b>	<b>14,294</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Notes:

[1]. Maple products such as taffy, sugar and maple butter have been converted to syrup equivalent.

[2]. Conversion factors: 1 gallon of syrup equals 10.0 pounds of maple sugar. One gallon of syrup weighs 13.24760 pounds. One gallon of syrup equals 10.4 pounds of taffy. The conversion of maple taffy to syrup varies with the density of syrup that year.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0354-01 Production and value of maple products



## Maple syrup production 2022

Canadian maple producers harvested a record-high 65,866 kilolitres of maple syrup in 2022, a 53.8% rise from 2021. Production was up across all maple-producing provinces largely because of favourable weather conditions and continued expansions in the industry. Higher yields in 2022 followed the previous year's lower production brought on by a short maple season attributable to warm spring temperatures in 2021.

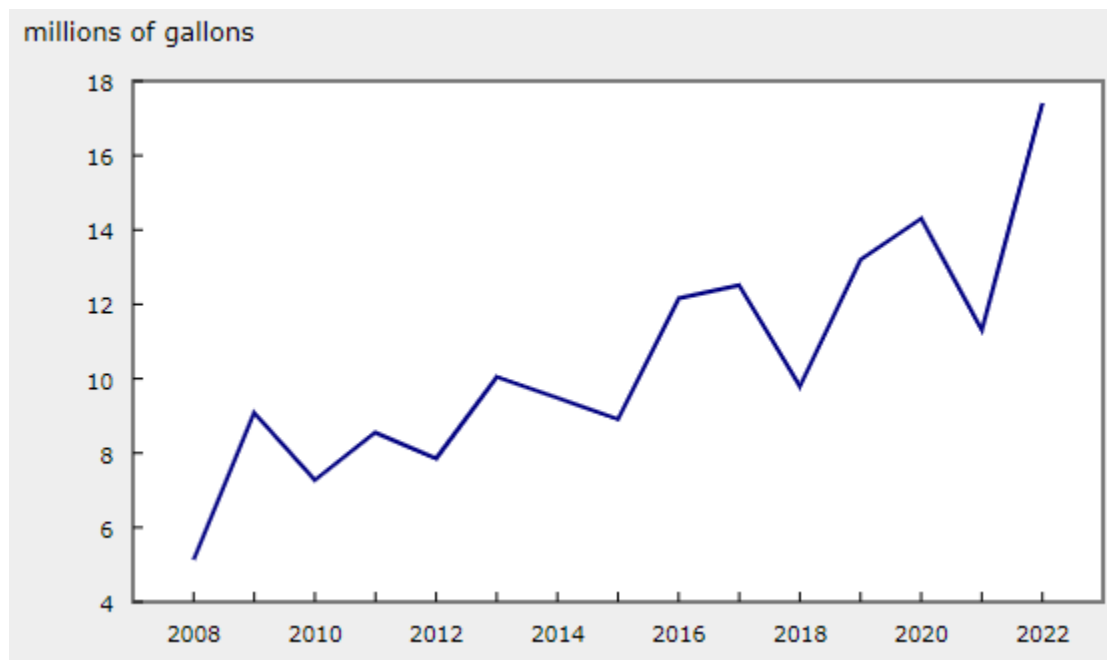
In 2022, the total production of maple syrup in Quebec was 15.9 million gallons, a 59.1% increase from 2021 and a record-high harvest for Canada's top maple-producing province. Excellent spring conditions contributed to an increased yield. This rise in production allowed the Federation of Quebec maple syrup producers to replenish its strategic reserve, which was accessed in 2021 to meet domestic and export demand. Quebec accounted for 90% of Canada's national production in 2022.

New Brunswick producers reported a maple harvest of 3,070 kilolitres, a 3.2% increase from 2021. This rise is attributable to new taps across the province and the growing New Brunswick maple industry. In Ontario, historic high yields in northern parts of the province contributed to a 27.7% rise in production to 2,233 kilolitres.

# C – Opportunity: The Future of the Maple Syrup Industry

The market for maple syrup is growing robustly, and there is reason for optimism that this growth will be sustained well into the future. The graph below illustrates the strong growth trend in Canadian maple syrup production over the previous fifteen years.

**Figure 6: Production of maple products - 15-year trend<sup>6</sup>**



The global maple syrup market was worth US\$1.58 billion in 2022, up from US\$1.49 billion in 2021. Between 2022 and 2028 the maple syrup market is expected to grow at a predicted compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2% through to 2028, when the market is estimated to reach US\$2.29 billion.

While overall market growth remains robust, the picture is not universally positive. Canadian exports have increased by 60% over the last ten years, but the rate of growth has slowed. Demand in Europe has stagnated, with the hopes that the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) may create new growth opportunities, with the elimination of the 8% tariff on sweeteners.

In contrast, the Asia market for high value, specialty, seasonal products is strong and growing, with the “made in Canada” label seen as a key attribute. Chinese imports of maple products has seen notable increases lately.

To meet the growing demand of a rapidly expanding world market, Quebec is planning to add another 120 million taps by the year 2080, on top of the 57 million taps currently in production

<sup>6</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221214/cg-e001-eng.htm>

in the province.<sup>7</sup> This plan, announced in 2021, called for 7 million new taps to be brought online by 2022. By contrast, there are currently 2 million taps in production in Ontario. If Ontario were to grow at an equivalent rate to Quebec, we would be adding 4.2 million taps over the coming decades. It is, however, reasonable that Ontario could sustain a significantly more rapid growth rate. Ontario has more maple tree resources than Quebec. We have the capacity to bring far more than 4.2 million taps online over the next 60 years, if other critical enablers are in place, including and especially people willing and able to make a career in maple, growing their operations to scale and securing the capital needed to fund large-scale expansion.

## Drivers of Growth

Drivers of this predicted growth in the maple syrup market include:

- Increased utilization of maple syrup in the bakery, confectionary, cereal and dairy industries
- Rising demand for organic and natural products worldwide
- Maple syrup's increasing use as a natural sweetener in various food products
- Rapidly changing global markets, with a combination of factors including increasing income levels, the improving economic conditions of consumers, and the growing consumption of balanced and nutritious food products across the globe
- the rising demand for baking food items such as waffles, cakes, French toast, pancakes, and bread rolls
- the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and obesity has led to the growing adoption of maple syrup as a substitute for sugar<sup>8</sup>

Given that maple syrup currently supplies less than 1% of all sugars consumed by Canadians, the potential impact of Canadian consumers' increasing turn towards natural sweeteners is significant.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://ppaq.ca/en/sale-purchase-maple-syrup/maple-economic-development/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/maple-syrup-market-report#:~:text=North%20America%20dominated%20the%20maple,healthy%20and%20nutritious%20food%20products.>

## D – Current Challenges

The 2023-2028 strategic planning process undertaken by the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association identified the following suite of eight challenges to the growth and health of Ontario's maple syrup sector.

### 1 - How to put more Ontario maple trees into production?

Ontario has 4.1% of Canadian maple syrup production as of 2021, compared to Quebec's 89% of production. Yet Ontario has 1.8 million hectares of maple-dominant stands, almost triple the amount found in Quebec. 137,000 hectares of this total is deemed high or very high quality. If Ontario increases the percentage of available maples that are tapped from the current 0.04% to 0.1% this would bring an additional 1.8 million taps online, expanding Ontario production by almost 100%.

There are two primary challenges in bringing more Ontario maple trees into production:

#### Identifying tree resources

Ontario's maple dominant forests fall over a vast territory, and are held under a range of ownership structures. The work of OMSPA's "More Trees" working group identified that maple forests on private and Crown land hold significant potential for increased tapping:

**Private land** – Ontario has twice as many opportunities to tap on private land as there are in Quebec, but our utilization rate is 2%, compared to an approximately 40% utilization rate in Quebec.

**Crown land** – Other provinces are growing in market share due to accessibility of Crown land. New Brunswick has 200 times the access to Crown land as Ontario, and has tripled production over the last 15 years with the province devoting 14K hectares of Crown land to the industry.

- Over 196,000 hectares of predominant maple stands on Crown Land are suitable for tapping, being close to roads, close to private lands, of a suitable size, and not allocated for harvest.
- Ontario taps less than 630 ha of our Crown stands, while Quebec and New Brunswick tap 31,706 ha and 9,239 ha, respectively.
- Since 2015 New Brunswick has made additional Crown land available for maple syrup production. By 2025 New Brunswick plans to increase the total area allocated for maple syrup production by an additional 12K hectares.

Ontario also has maple forests on Conservation Authority and Indigenous land. While opportunities exist here, the majority of opportunities lie with private and Crown land.

There is currently a lack of high-resolution data on where promising concentrations of maple-dominant forest lie. If significant amounts of additional Ontario maple forest are going to be tapped, the availability of these forests will need to be mapped with significantly more resolution than now exists.

## Accessing additional maple forests

In addition to uncertainty about the size and location of maple forests that are potentially available for tapping, Ontario producers face significant hurdles in accessing these trees. With regards to Crown land, while there is an established procedure to secure permission for tapping on Crown land, in practice Ontario producers have found that this process is applied unpredictably across the province based on the views, knowledge and disposition of the local representatives of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

With private land holders, a primary barrier is our current producer's lack of data on where suitable stands of mature maple may exist, and a lack of any formal mechanism to connect and facilitate producers who want to expand with landowners who have suitable maple stands. Many producers do not know how to go about accessing more trees on privately held land, and many landowners do not understand commercial opportunities related to renting their trees to a producer.

## 2 - Accelerating challenges from climate change

Climate change is already having a profound impact on Ontario's maple syrup producers. Climate change is impacting maple syrup production in three ways:

### 1. Sugarbush health

Climate change is negatively impacting sugarbush health through:

- Increased frequency of native pest outbreaks and exotic pest invasion.
- Increased frequency and severity of extreme climatic events, including drought, extreme winds, and ice storms.
- The potential for more frequent spring frosts, with the potential to damage and delay canopy development.
- Reduced winter snowpack and more winter rain leading to fine root damage.

In addition to these negative impacts, the health of sugarbushes in various areas could benefit from warmer and longer growing seasons if properly managed.

### 2. Maple season timing

Across Ontario, tapping seasons are beginning earlier and becoming shorter and more unpredictable. Southerly latitudes will experience fewer days that are favourable for maple syrup production, while northerly latitudes may experience more. Overall, buddy (unusable) sap will appear earlier and more unpredictably. Shifting and unpredictable tapping seasons have implications for labour availability, with labour availability identified as a priority issue for Ontario's maple syrup industry over the coming decades.

### 3. Geography

The optimal climatic regions for sugar maple growth will shrink in the southern range while potentially growing in the north. Climatologist Dave Phillips has stated to OMSPA that by 2050 there will be no maple syrup produced south of Lake Erie.<sup>9</sup> There is the potential that

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<sup>9</sup> OMSPA Mainline Magazine, Spring 2023 <https://www.omspa.ca/past-newsletters>

the rate of tree migration will not keep pace with climate change. By the same token, there may be a delay of several decades before existing mature maple in southern latitudes decline.

## Impact

In aggregate, pressures from climate change are negatively impacting producers due to rising costs (investments in climate change adaptation measures and increasing carbon taxation on fuels and energy), increasing risks of lower yields and less sugary sap, and increased stress. A 2015 North American survey found that most producers believe that sap quantity and quality is declining due to climate change. The impact of climate change is accelerating, with producers in Ontario in 2022 recording declining yields due to increasing global temperatures, which are leading to more invasive pests, sap that is less sugary and shorter harvesting periods than the normal four-to-six-week season.<sup>10</sup>

## 3 - Protecting and developing the market for Ontario maple syrup

To date, Ontario producers have been effective at commanding superior prices for Ontario maple syrup sold through their own retail efforts. This speaks directly to both the ability of Ontario producers to consistently produce syrup of the highest quality, and the value placed by Ontario consumers on locally produced, natural food products.

However, in contrast to retail sales, the bulk market for maple syrup in Canada is dominated by Quebec due to their overwhelming market share. As a consequence, there is limited ability to segregate bulk Ontario maple syrup from the blended bulk maple syrup supply chain, let alone command a premium price. The challenge for Ontario is how to develop a domestic bulk maple syrup value chain that allows for bulk Ontario maple syrup to be marketed as a distinct product, with the potential to command a premium price when compared to bulk purchase options from Quebec, with their lot-based purchasing system.

In addition, demographic trends indicate potential challenges to and opportunities for Ontario retail sales. There is a growing population of newer Canadians in Ontario, with no cultural background of maple syrup use. Existing marketing and branding strategies will need to be re-examined to reach this increasingly important market.

## 4 - Looming human resource challenges

OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic planning process identified a suite of three challenges that threaten to undermine sectoral growth due to a lack of required human resources:

### The lack of training available in Ontario

Ontario institutions do not offer any formal courses or training in maple syrup production. Nor do we as a province have any capacity in or resources dedicated to identifying and bringing in training resources from other jurisdictions to Ontario producers.

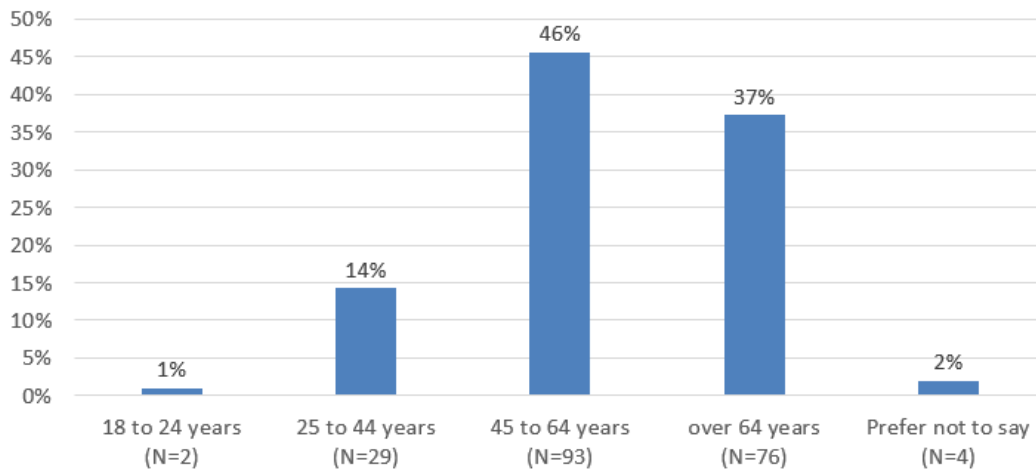
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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/05/30/maple-syrup-producers-see-climate-change-as-a-threat-to-industrys-future.html>

## The aging base of existing producers

The average age of Ontario maple syrup producers has been trending upwards for several decades now. Currently, only 15% of OMSPA members are under the age of 45, with 37% over the age of 64. As the chart below illustrates, there is a looming demographic crisis in the industry. Given that more than 40% of Ontario operations have been operating for more than 25 years, and 20% have been operating across multiple generations, the lack of younger producers entering the sector is concerning.

**Figure 7: Average age of OMSPA members (2023)**

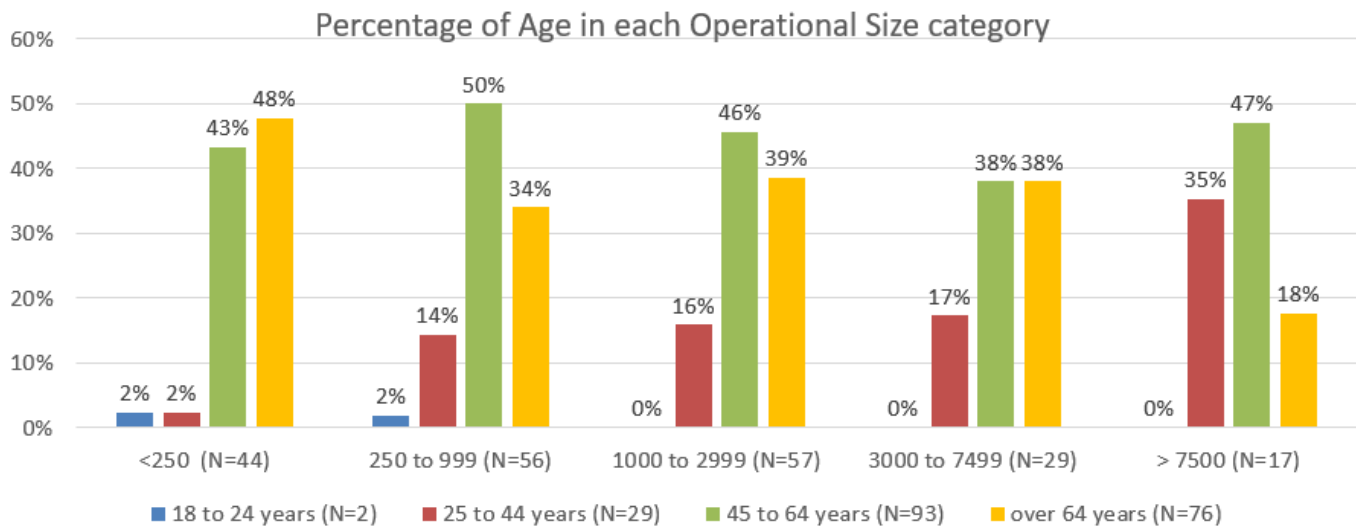


## Issues engaging the younger generation of producers

Closely associated with the risk posed by an aging base of Ontario producers are the challenges in engaging a new, younger generation of producers. While other maple syrup producing jurisdictions have active programs and resources to attract and support new young producers, and other Ontario producers' associations have well developed programs targeting younger producers such as the Ontario Beef Youth Alliance, there are no comparable programs in place for Ontario's maple syrup sector.

The one ray of optimism in the current demographic trends in Ontario producers is the fact that younger producers, while small in proportion to the total number of producers, are significantly more likely than older producers to be operating one of the larger operations in the province, with 35% of operations with more than 7,500 taps featuring owners between 25 and 44 years in age. Younger producers are also significantly more likely to report that they are interested in expanding in the future as compared to older producers. This suggests that Ontario maple syrup production may be entering into a period of consolidation, with fewer producers running larger operations.

**Figure 8: Ontario producers - distribution of ownership of operations by size and age**



It is important to note that older producers in Ontario tend to have smaller operations. As determined by OMSPA's Cost of Production Working Group, the minimum size for an economically viable part time operation is roughly 2,500 to 3,000 taps.<sup>11</sup> With older producers operating a strong majority of the smaller sugar bushes in Ontario, with the vast majority of their operations below the economically viable threshold, there is the growing risk that upon the retirement or death of these older operators their operations go out of production rather than being sold or adopted by the next generation.

## 5 - Productivity and innovation – no home-grown extension and research capacity

The OMSPA Applied Research & Training working group conducted a detailed examination of the need for maple industry-focused research and training capacity in Ontario.<sup>12</sup> This group identified that Ontario research and development focused on maple production is unfunded and unorganized compared to competitor jurisdictions. There is significant training and research being undertaken in Quebec, Vermont, and New York.

Because of the extensive research being undertaken and training resources being developed in these jurisdictions, Ontario does not need to duplicate these efforts. Instead, we should capitalize on available external resources to the full extent possible.

However, to do so we need to address the significant technology transfer gap that currently exists. This external body of research and training resources is being developed in jurisdictions with different environmental conditions and policy considerations. Ontario needs extension expertise that can synthesize training and research from other jurisdictions, adapting it to Ontario and communicating and delivering it across the sector.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.omspa.ca/cost-of-production-model>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.omspa.ca/applied-research-and-training>



## 6 - Quality assurance for a premium product

Ontario's ability to maintain its current premium retail pricing within and external to Ontario depends on the strong association of our product with the highest quality. Going back two to three decades, there was a major push in Ontario's maple syrup sector to remove lead from production equipment. This initiative was highly successful, with lead now virtually eliminated from Ontario maple syrup production.

However, since this time the issue of quality assurance in Ontario's maple syrup sector has fallen off the radar within the Ontario government. As a result, Ontario's already limited expertise in regulatory enforcement has been almost entirely eliminated. In addition, there are ongoing challenges in keeping Ontario producers as focused on quality assurance. These challenges include a lack of resources to develop and communicate best practices in quality assurance to producers (see Point 5 above addressing Ontario's lack of training resources), and the need for general education of Ontario producers as to the critical importance of quality assurance to the future of the Ontario maple syrup brand.

It should be noted that producer groups in other jurisdictions have developed quality assurance and food safety certification programs far beyond those in Ontario, and this may give these jurisdictions a marketing edge over Ontario syrup.

## 7 - The sustainability and effectiveness of OMSPA

An effective producers' association can be an effective vehicle to stimulate and support sectoral growth. For over 50 years, the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association (OMSPA) has brought together and supported Ontario's maple syrup producers. Historically, OMSPA has been built and has operated due to an immense amount of volunteer commitment from its members. This commitment and engagement is still in evidence – approximately 20% of OMSPA's membership were directly involved in the organization's 2023-2028 planning process through involvement in one of ten strategic working groups.

However, OMSPA is struggling with the general erosion of volunteerism found throughout society. It is uncertain whether OMSPA can evolve as necessary to steward Ontario producers through this period of great opportunity and challenge if this evolution and expansion must rely exclusively on additional volunteer effort. Associated with this general erosion of volunteerism is the fact that much of the current OMSPA leadership is in their sixties and seventies. A sustainable OMSPA requires deeper involvement and engagement from Ontario's younger producers.

OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan directly addresses two other challenges to the organization's long-term sustainability and effectiveness: 1) the modernization of OMSPA's governance structure according to current organizational best practices, and 2) the need to develop further sustainable sources of income for the organization.

The deep analysis of OMSPA's governance that was conducted as part of the 2023-2028 strategic planning process identified a governance structure that was bloated, and provided unbalanced representation to the board. This analysis further identified that while OMSPA's Locals play an essential role within OMSPA, this role needs to be both clarified and further supported from the central organization.

The goals established in OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan require funding. While government will play an essential role in supporting OMSPA through this period of

unprecedented opportunity and challenges, there is the need to develop sustainable funding streams to augment its current budget.

## 8 - The need for quality industry data

Strategic decision making, sectoral or otherwise, is only as good as the information that informs the decision-making process. While Ontario has decent sectoral data on Ontario's maple syrup sector as compared to other maple syrup producing jurisdictions, with credit due to OMAFRA's Chief Economist, there is a general lack of comprehensive sectoral data on maple syrup production, whether for Ontario or elsewhere. This lack of effective sectoral data is a challenge for charting an optimum path forward for Ontario's maple syrup sector, from producers through to OMSPA and to the Ontario government itself. Framed in the positive, a strong body of quality industry data can serve as a future competitive advantage for Ontario's maple syrup sector.

## E – The Path Forward

### A Partnership between Industry and Government

The path forward that best addresses the eight priority challenges facing Ontario’s maple syrup sector involves a partnership between maple syrup producers and their association on the one hand, and the Ontario and Federal Governments on the other. This discussion of the path forward for the Ontario maple syrup sector looks at the role of both government and OMSPA and its members in addressing each of the eight priority sectoral challenges that have been identified.

#### Challenge 1 - How to put more Ontario maple trees into production?

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p><b>Identifying maple resources</b></p> <p>Government has a central role to play in the use of digital mapping to get a clear picture of the location and availability of untapped maple forest across Ontario. This initiative would be somewhat of a blend of Agricultural lands Data with LiDar work in the forest sector. Government could either conduct this work internally, with sectoral expertise provided by OMSPA, or could contract this work out to OMSPA, potentially in partnership with the Ontario Woodlot Association.</p>	<p>OMSPA has a central role providing deep industry expertise to the mapping initiative. This expertise could be provided either in an advisory role to a government initiative, or OMSPA could conduct this work on a contract basis, similar to the Forest Inventory contract awarded to the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA). OMSPA is partnering with the OWA on a maple forest mapping initiative.</p>

## **Accessing maple resources**

Government has two important roles to play in allowing Ontario producers to access the maple trees needed for substantial growth:

### 1. Smoothing the pathway to accessing Crown land

While accessing maple stands on crown land for tapping is currently not impossible, there is no standardized, predictable process, creating a very significant burden on individual producers who might be thinking about such opportunities.

The Ontario Government can implement two related measures to promote the expansion of sustainable maple syrup production onto available crown resources:

- Develop templates and processes for applying to lease access to crown maple stands, providing predictability and certainty to both producers and government managers.
- Put knowledgeable resources in place that both understand the process for producers to apply to lease government trees, and can assist and facilitate producers through the process.

### 2. Working towards recognizing sustainable use of forest resources for carbon sequestration

As climate change becomes an increasingly urgent driver of policy, implementing a system that recognized / monetized the sustainable use of forest resources for carbon sequestration would directly enhance the attractiveness of putting additional private lands into production, both for landowners and producers.

OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the creation of a Land Access Support Committee, tasked with the following objectives:

- Developing and circulating to Ontario producers a how-to guide for accessing maple on different types of land – crown, private, Indigenous and Conservation Authority.
- Exploring the creation of an OMSPA land bank digital platform that connects producers looking for opportunities for expansion with landowners interested in leasing trees for tapping.
- Exploit existing digital platforms to connect producers with property owners interested in renting trees for tapping, including farmsatwork.ca and farmlink.net.
- Assist producers in developing business cases for bringing more taps into production.
- Connect producers who are new to leasing additional taps with a mentor producer who has already successfully navigated the process.

## Challenge 2 - Mitigating the risks of climate change

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p><b>Understanding the impact of climate change</b></p> <p>The impacts of climate change are highly regional. Not only will Ontario maple syrup producers experience climate change in a unique way from other jurisdictions, but producers in different parts of Ontario will be affected in sometimes radically different ways.</p> <p>If the risks of climate change are going to be successfully navigated, accurate information about pending impacts and challenges is needed at the regional level.</p> <p>Whether this research is conducted internal to government, or the government supports an external expert research body to conduct this work, arming Ontario producers with accurate information on the future impacts of climate change is essential.</p>	<p>OMSPA's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan calls for the creation of the Maple Applied Research &amp; Training (MART) Centre to provide essential information, training, and education to Ontario producers.</p> <p>Issues related to challenges posed by climate change would be a high priority for the MART Centre, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research on silvicultural practices within sugar bushes to mitigate against the rapidly changing climate, including issues of biodiversity and spacing.</li> <li>• Deeper research into the effect of a warming climate on brix (sugar) levels in sap and potential mitigation measures.</li> <li>• Developing models for forecasting optimal sap flow conditions to enable producers to better predict the start / end of the changing seasons.</li> <li>• Researching improved biomass equations for estimating carbon sequestration in managed sugarbushes.</li> <li>• Education, focused on identifying and circulating best practices in climate change adaptation and risk management.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting Implementation Initiatives</b></p> <p>Government has an essential role in supporting the implementation initiatives that will emerge from the climate change focus at the proposed Maple Applied Research &amp; Training (MART) Centre.</p>	

**Monetization of carbon sequestration**

Maple syrup production is a fully sustainable method of extracting value from Ontario’s forests. Sugar bushes sequester large amounts of carbon every year. A stand of 100 small but tappable maple trees will sequester over 1 tonne of CO2 per year. At the other end of the scale, a producer with 50,000 taps has a carbon sequestration budget of over 1,000 tonnes of CO2 per year. A growing body of case studies is demonstrating that maple syrup production in Ontario can be provably net zero.

A policy instrument that incentivized environmental services that deliver carbon sequestration would be of significant value to Ontario’s maple syrup sector. Not only would the business model be improved and de-risked to a significant degree, but this government recognition of the Ontario industry’s net-zero or carbon positive status could serve as a powerful marketing and branding tool.

OMSPA is currently prioritizing the development of a standardized set of carbon accounting practices for maple syrup production, with the twin goals of accelerating government recognition and promoting increased adoption of carbon efficient maple syrup production methods and technologies. These standardized practices will include an effort to introduce regulations on standardizing and measuring evaporator efficiency.

When/if a carbon sequestration-based incentive scheme is in place, OMSPA will assist its members in certifying their net zero status, and will continue to promote and educate Ontario producers as to the benefits of lowering the carbon footprint of their operations. OMSPA will further leverage Ontario maple syrup’s net-zero status to generate increased market demand.

### Challenge 3 - Protecting and developing the Ontario maple syrup brand

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p><b>Protecting and developing the Ontario retail market</b></p> <p>Ontario producers secure the best price per litre for maple syrup sold direct to consumer of any jurisdiction in North America. Key goals for the Ontario maple syrup sector are to protect and enhance the premium pricing for Ontario syrup, while expanding retail market demand.</p> <p>The Government of Ontario has several important roles in protecting and developing the home-grown market for Ontario maple syrup:</p> <p><u>Generating a better understanding of the Ontario market</u> – Developing and maintaining an effective marketing and branding campaign for Ontario maple syrup requires a detailed and accurate understanding of Ontario consumers (detailed market segmentation) and the multiple ways the market is changing and evolving.</p> <p><u>Implementing an effective quality assurance capacity within Ontario’s maple syrup sector</u> – The premium pricing secured for Ontario maple syrup is based on its positioning as a high-quality, home-grown product. Maintaining and enhancing the strong association between Ontario maple syrup and quality will be at the heart of future marketing and branding efforts.</p> <p><u>Support for an industry-led marketing and branding campaign focused on the Ontario market</u> – OMSPA’s 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for developing and launching a multi-year marketing and branding campaign, capitalizing on key market trends including increasing preference for buying local, and growing awareness of natural alternatives to processed</p>	<p>As a general statement, Ontario producers have done an excellent job of retail marketing at the local level, as evidenced by the superior price per litre secured as compared to other jurisdictions. While important steps have been taken in creating an effective provincial brand (Sweet Ontario), the Ontario industry has not been as successful at marketing due to lack of sustained support.</p> <p>OMSPA has identified brand and market development as crucial to the future financial success of the sector. The 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the development and launch of a comprehensive provincial marketing/branding campaign.</p> <p>The development and launch of this market/branding campaign will require deep engagement with external food branding expertise, and involve three phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Exploration, market data gathering and strategy development</li> <li>2 – Innovation and scenario planning (refining the strategy)</li> <li>3 – Team composition and execution</li> </ol> <p>OMSPA requires multi-year support from the Ontario government to execute on this marketing /branding campaign with excellence.</p> <p>It should be noted that the proposed marketing/branding campaign will include a focus on reaching the growing population of newer Canadians with no cultural background in maple syrup.</p>

sugar. This marketing/branding campaign will need sustained support from the Ontario Government if it is to be successful.

### **Creating a bulk market for Ontario maple syrup**

While Ontario producers are successful in retail marketing their product locally, Quebec currently dominates bulk sales of maple syrup. While this provides a guaranteed outlet for producers to sell significant quantities of syrup, this precludes the possibility of differentiating bulk Ontario maple syrup on quality. Ontario syrup does not command a premium price on bulk markets, and is not identity preserved (i.e., Ontario bulk syrup is blended with bulk syrup from Quebec and elsewhere).

With OMSPA taking the lead on developing the bulk market for Ontario maple syrup, the Ontario Government will be supporting this effort through its general support for OMSPA.

OMSPA will be considering options for creating a bulk market specific for Ontario maple syrup, with two mechanisms being evaluated:

1. OMSPA serving as a broker for bulk Ontario maple syrup, allowing large packers and distributors to easily source large quantities of bulk Ontario maple syrup.
2. Supporting the launch of additional provincial bottling capacity, providing a destination for Ontario bulk syrup.

### **Positioning Ontario maple syrup as premium in other markets**

Quebec dominates the national and international promotion of maple syrup internationally. National and international marketing of Canadian maple syrup is done through the Roundtable, a national body on which OMSPA has a seat, but which is primarily controlled by Quebec due to its dominant size. It is not anticipated that marketing of Ontario maple syrup to national and international markets will be a sectoral priority over the next five years.

Ontario producers benefit directly from the Roundtable's national and international marketing efforts, and OMSPA cannot match the resources being invested. As such, OMSPA is not focusing on national and international marketing for the foreseeable future.

When OMSPA feels that it makes sense to contemplate differentiating Ontario maple syrup in foreign markets, the near US markets are the next logical market. While there is an opportunity to differentiate Ontario maple syrup based on quality in these markets, care will be taken to avoid negative branding of competitors or generic maple syrup.

As a general statement, OMSPA's branding and market development efforts will align and not compete with the Roundtable's efforts.



## Challenge 4 - Addressing the looming human resource challenges

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p>There is no simple answer to the looming human resource challenges being faced by Ontario's maple syrup industry. Ensuring that the lack of new producers and trained labour does not throttle rapid growth in the sector will require an ongoing partnership between government and the sector.</p> <p>Government can play an important role in developing a better understanding of the existing demographic forces at work, and what the best strategies are for attracting and developing the required workforce.</p> <p>Training will be a crucial ingredient in meeting the workforce needs of a growing industry. Support for the proposed Maple Applied Research &amp; Technology (MART) Centre is an important step in putting in place the training resources needed.</p>	<p>The Ontario Maple Producers' Association has identified the lack of young newcomers as one of the priority issues to be addressed over the next five years. It is recognized that there is a need to attract new participants into the Ontario maple syrup sector at scale from the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From colleges and University diploma and degree programs / courses</li> <li>• From other Ontario agricultural sectors</li> <li>• From other Ontario-based business sectors (non-agriculture)</li> <li>• Experienced maple product producers from other jurisdictions</li> <li>• Supporting existing producers to expand their operations to commercially viable scales</li> </ul> <p>OMSPA's 2023-2-28 strategic plan further emphasizes the need for significantly increased training capacity, with the potential to realize a full diploma-level program in maple production in partnership with an established post-secondary institution.</p>

## Challenge 5 - Putting Ontario-focused research and training capacity in place

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p>Ontario’s primary competitors in Maple syrup production, and more specifically Quebec, Vermont, and New York State, host training, research and extension capacity focused on the maple syrup sector. As of 2023, Ontario has no equivalent capacity.</p> <p>Given how regionally specific many of the challenges facing maple syrup production are, the lack of Ontario-based training and extension services constitutes a competitive disadvantage for Ontario producers.</p> <p>There is an important role for Government in supporting the development and launch of an Ontario research/training centre focused on the maple syrup industry, as presented in OMSPA’s 2023-2028 strategic plan.</p>	<p>Recognizing the critical role of applied research and training to the future health of Ontario maple syrup production, OMSPA’s 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the development of the Maple Applied Research &amp; Training (MART) Centre, to deliver high quality training and educational resources, while promoting and translating research on cutting edge issues and technologies of relevance to Ontario producers.</p> <p>However, given the existence of training and research materials being developed by other maple syrup producing jurisdictions, there is no need for Ontario to re-invent the wheel. Rather than developing training and extension resources from the ground up, the MART Centre will act more like a clearing house – identifying what training and resources are needed by Ontario producers, identifying what existing material best meets these needs, and partnering to make this material available to Ontario producers in a way that is specifically focused on the Ontario context.</p> <p>The MART Centre, working directly with OMSPA staff and the volunteers at OMSPA Locals across the province, will make training and resources locally available to Ontario producers. The MART Centre will also take the lead in partnering with an established Ontario educational institution to develop more comprehensive maple syrup industry training, with the potential to structure this as part of an agriculture or forestry diploma program.</p>

## Challenge 6 - Ensuring quality product

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p>Government has an essential role, in collaboration with OMSPA, in putting effective quality assurance measures in place. The two essential roles are:</p> <p><u>1 – Support for the proposed Maple Applied Research &amp; Training (MART) Centre.</u> The MART Centre will play a crucial role in developing quality assurance and food safety resources and best practices, and providing these resources to Ontario producers through training and other support mechanisms.</p> <p><u>2 – Reinstatement of knowledgeable inspector capacity.</u> The Ontario Government used to have a small regulatory team that was knowledgeable about maple syrup production, but this expertise is no longer with government. This leaves the Ontario Government largely blind when dealing with regulatory issues affecting maple syrup producers. It is essential that this knowledge be re-developed within OMAFRA, to allow effective ongoing regulatory engagement with the sector. The Ontario maple syrup sector requires a predictable, consistent and supported regulatory system.</p>	<p>Ensuring a quality maple product is at the heart of OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan. This plan calls for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing updated and effective quality assurance training and resources for OMSPA members through the proposed Maple Applied Research &amp; Training (MART) Centre.</li> <li>2. The ongoing promotion of the importance of quality assurance within Ontario producers.</li> <li>3. Developing a comprehensive marketing and branding campaign that differentiates Ontario maple syrup on quality.</li> </ol>

## Challenge 7 – Securing the sustainability of the producers’ association model

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p>Across Ontario and in provinces across Canada, responsibilities that were previously held by government have been devolving to producers’ associations such as OMSPA. In the increasingly complex environment in which Canadian food products are harvested and produced, having strong producers’ associations is correlated with sectoral health and growth.</p> <p>The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers’ Association (OMSPA) has been in place since 1966, and has effectively operated for over 5 decades through the volunteer commitments of its membership. As identified in its 2023-2028 strategic planning process, OMSPA needs to expand into new and critical areas necessary for the long-term health of the sector while conducting an update to the governance model to conform with current best practices in governance. At the same time, there is the need to identify new funding sources to support this expanded scope of operations, while addressing our society’s erosion of volunteerism. So OMSPA needs to expand and restructure, while developing new funding mechanisms and putting new paid resources in place to backfill in areas formerly addressed by producer volunteers.</p> <p>While other Ontario producers’ associations have been expanding to meet these modern mandates (see for example the Ontario Beekeepers Association), OMSPA has not. As compared to other Ontario producers’ associations, OMSPA is significantly under-resourced, with only 0.5 FTE (full time equivalents) on staff.</p> <p>With OMSPA playing a central role in supporting the growth and health of Ontario maple syrup production, increased core</p>	<p>OMSPA’s 2023-2028 strategic planning process has identified a number of areas in which OMSPA needs to be expanded and strengthened. Goals of this five-year strategic plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reworked governance structure, updating OMSPA leadership and oversight to conform with current best practices.</li> <li>• The refocusing and strengthening of OMSPA Locals, critical to developing regional producer communities and to tying producers directly in with the provincial sector.</li> <li>• The comprehensive evaluation and refocusing (as necessary) of the services being offered by OMSPA to Ontario producers.</li> <li>• Expanding OMSPA’s core professional staff from 0.5 FTE to at least 2 FTE, to support the expanding scope of the organization’s activities.</li> <li>• Develop new streams of sustainable funding.</li> </ul> <p>OMSPA will require the support of Government to effectively execute on this needed expansion and refocusing. Over time it is envisioned that OMSPA will develop the required additional funding streams to largely support this renewed organizational structure. However, over the short to medium term sustained core funding support is needed from Government.</p>

funding is essential to support a dynamic and effective OMSPA.

### Challenge 8 - Using Ontario sectoral data for effective strategic planning

Role of Government	Role of Industry (OMSPA)
<p>Accurate data is an essential tool in identifying the best strategies for supporting the future of Ontario maple syrup production. OMAFRA's Chief Economist has actively supported the Ontario Maple Syrup Producer's Association in its strategic planning process, and participated in the OMSPA working group that mapped available versus desired data in detail. Continued support of this nature is a foundation to a strong sectoral development approach.</p> <p>OMAFRA and the Federal Government should work closely with OMSPA to both ensure that the right data is being collected, and to rationalize data collection, avoiding overlap for maximum efficiency. As the quality of Ontario's maple syrup sector data improves, there will be opportunities for partnerships with OMSPA and academic researchers to analyze this data.</p>	<p>OMSPA's detailed examination of available data on Ontario's maple syrup sector identified that while Ontario's data on the maple syrup sector was far from complete, it compared favourably with available data in other jurisdictions, except Quebec. OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the organization to be an active steward of sectoral data, working in close cooperation with the Ontario Government.</p> <p>OMSPA's internal member surveys are an invaluable source of sectoral data that is otherwise unavailable, and care needs to be taken in maximizing the effectiveness of this survey while minimizing its burden on producers.</p> <p>There is currently a lack of sufficient modelling of Ontario maple syrup production business models. This presents a barrier to producers contemplating expansion, or to those contemplating becoming producers. Recognizing this problem, in 2022 OMSPA struck a working group tasked with developing a cost of production model. This work provided valuable insights, and will provide a strong foundation for further, more detailed work.</p> <p>And lastly, there is a crucial role for OMSPA in identifying, collecting, and maintaining sectoral data, with further responsibility for analysis, providing insights of value both to producers and to government.</p>

## F – Alignment with Government Priorities

The priorities for Ontario's maple syrup sector that have been identified in this analysis were developed in an intensive strategic planning process that directly involved one in five OMSPA members in one or more working groups that developed detailed analyses of issues critical to Ontario maple syrup producers.

As OMSPA members were engaged in identifying their strategic priorities for 2023 to 2028, the same was going on between Ministers of Agriculture from coast to coast to coast. In 2021 the Guelph Statement was released, a joint statement of all provinces, territories, and the federal government that presents a shared vision for Canadian agriculture in 2028 and a shared suite of policy priorities.

The Guelph Statement identifies priorities for five areas of focus:

1. Tackling **climate change and environmental protection** to support GHG emission reductions and the long-term vitality of the sector while positioning producers and processors to seize economic opportunities from evolving consumer demands
2. Continued and targeted investments in **science, research, and innovation** to address key challenges and opportunities
3. Supporting sustainable agriculture and economic growth by creating the conditions for Canadian businesses to meet evolving challenges of the interconnected **domestic and global marketplace**
4. Building **sector capacity** and **growth** through realizing the potential of value added agri-food and agri-products
5. Enhancing **resiliency** to anticipate, mitigate and respond to risks, including a robust suite of Business Risk Management programs

It is striking how aligned the priorities of Ontario's maple syrup sector are with the five areas of priority identified in the Guelph Statement above. The following pages examine the many areas of intersection between specific priorities identified under each of the five focus areas of the Guelph Statement and the priorities of Ontario's maple syrup sector.

## Climate Change & Environment

Policy Priority	Maple Syrup Industry Strategy	Role of Government
Prepare for and respond to a changing climate by supporting Beneficial Management Practices and accelerating technological adoption	<p>Establish the Maple Applied Research &amp; Training (MART) Centre, to accelerate Ontario-specific research in climate change while accelerating the adoption of adaptive technologies and methodologies.</p> <p>Partner with the MART Centre to offer training and educational resources on climate change mitigation to Ontario producers.</p>	Support OMSPA in establishing the MART Centre.
Reduce GHG emissions, and improve carbon sequestration	<p>Develop a set of a standardized set of carbon accounting practices for maple syrup production, with the twin goals of accelerating government recognition and promoting increased adoption of carbon efficient maple syrup production methods and technologies.</p> <p>Assist Ontario producers in certifying their net zero status when/if a carbon neutral incentive scheme is put in place.</p>	Consider developing a policy instrument that incentivized carbon sequestration through effective environmental stewardship of Ontario's natural resources.
Protect and regenerate soil, water and air quality	Provide education and training in best practices in maple forest silviculture in partnership with the MART Centre.	Support OMSPA in establishing the MART Centre.

## Science, Research & Innovation

Policy Priority	Maple Syrup Industry Strategy	Role of Government
Address challenges such as climate change and pursue opportunities such as new markets	The proposed Maple Applied Research & Training (MART) Centre will take the lead in addressing the research, training and technology extension services needed by Ontario producers to successfully navigate the challenges of the coming decades.	Support the proposed MART Centre.
Support research in primary agriculture, agronomy, and value-added		
Accelerate the development and adoption of new technologies and finding energy efficiencies		
Enhance data collection, extension activities, performance measures, knowledge exchange and transfer	In addition to pursuing the launch of the MART Centre, OMSPA is forming a Data Committee, tasked with collecting, curating, and analyzing data on Ontario maple syrup production.	Maintain the strong interest and support from the Chief Economist at OMAFRA, while engaging with OMSPA to optimize and rationalize data gathering in Ontario's maple syrup sector.



## Market Development & Trade

Policy Priority	Maple Syrup Industry Strategy	Role of Government
Collaborate to pursue and defend Canadian trade interests and advance science-based trade rule	Continue to actively engage in and support the market building efforts of the Roundtable, the national coordinating body for Canada's national and international marketing efforts for maple syrup and derivatives.	There may be a role for the Government of Ontario to support the expansion of bottling capacity in Ontario, addressing a long-identified bottleneck while making it possible to market a premium Ontario syrup in bulk quantities.
Support market diversification and efforts to remove barriers to interprovincial trade		
Support export readiness and identify and pursue market development opportunities abroad and domestically such as buy local	In addition to active participation in the Roundtable, OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for the launch of a marketing/branding campaign aimed at the Ontario market.	OMSPA will require support from the Government of Ontario to develop an effective marketing / branding campaign focused on the Ontario market.
Meet domestic and international demand for sustainable primary production and processing practices	OMSPA is focused on putting in place the tools, education and support needed for Ontario producers to grow market share in this period of rapid market expansion.	Multi-faceted support for Ontario's maple syrup producers, as outlined in this document outlining sector development priorities, will be required if our home-grown sector is going to be able to grow to meet coming market demand.

## Building Sector Capacity, Growth & Competitiveness

Priorities	Maple Syrup Industry Strategy	Role of Government
Improve productivity through the development and adoption of technology, digitization, and artificial intelligence	The mandate of the proposed Maple Applied Research & Training (MART Centre) will include ongoing outreach and extension services focused on bringing new innovations in maple production into Ontario operations.	Government can support the proposed MART Centre, while deploying advanced mapping technologies to work with OMSPA to map the availability of sugar maple stands with much greater resolution than has been done to date.
Enhance labour attraction and retention, training, and automation	OMSPA has identified the challenge of attracting new producers into the sector as a top priority in its 2023-2028 strategic plan. A multi-faceted approach is being developed, including developing a detailed understanding of why the younger generations are not entering the maple syrup business, and comprehensive support for new producers, reducing the barriers to entry.	Work with OMSPA to address the looming demographic crisis in Ontario's maple syrup sector.
Foster the next generation of farmers, considering economic, training, and other barriers to entry		

## Resiliency & Public Trust

Policy Priority	Maple Syrup Industry Strategy	Role of Government
Encourage and support proactive risk management, including climate risk	Ontario maple syrup producers have identified climate change as a primary risk to the future of the sector. OMSPA is developing the Maple Applied Research & Training (MART) Centre to arm Ontario producers with the knowledge, training and technology extension support they need to mitigate against the growing climatic risks.	With OMSPA providing leadership in proactive management of the risks of climate change through the MART Centre, renewing and increasing the sector's focus on quality assurance - also through the MART Centre, and strengthening the Ontario maple syrup brand through a campaign focused on superior quality and rich history, the Government can play an invaluable role by supporting these sector-led efforts.
Support the sector to develop, adopt, and enhance assurance systems	OMSPA's 2023-2028 strategic plan calls for a renewed focus on quality assurance, including developing updated best practices materials, and delivering high quality training and support to producers in their adoption.	The Ontario Government further has an important role in rebuilding internal regulatory expertise regarding quality assurance in maple syrup production.
Fostering awareness of sector commitment to the sustainable production of safe, high-quality food and building public trust while increasing sector awareness of the expectations of consumers	As proposed by OMSPA, the Ontario maple syrup brand will be differentiated based on superior quality and the rich history of artisanal, craft production of this unique product. The first priority of the proposed marketing/branding campaign is to develop a detailed understanding of Ontario consumers and their relationship with maple syrup. Sustained, multi-year support will be necessary to achieve effective brand building for Ontario maple syrup.	

## G – Impact

When contemplating the impact that effective sectoral support will have on the Ontario maple syrup sector, and Ontario as a whole, two scenarios are contemplated:

**Scenario 1 – Ontario producers maintain their market share** in the face of a rapidly increasing market and ever-increasing competitive pressures from Quebec and other jurisdictions. This is not a status quo scenario. A status quo future for the Ontario sector will see erosion of market share as Quebec and other jurisdictions grow significantly faster than Ontario’s current trajectory. Maintaining market share, which inherently will require significant growth, represents success.

If the Ontario maple syrup sector can maintain its current percentage of the market, the sector will grow at the forecasted compound annual growth rate of 6.2%, resulting in a doubling of annual farm gate receipts in roughly ten years to \$53 million per year.

**Scenario 2 – Ontario producers double their market share**, successfully increasing the awareness of Ontario consumers of the superior quality and rich history of locally produced maple syrup. Under this scenario Ontario consumers preferentially choose Ontario syrup as differentiated from generic syrup. To achieve this scenario, it is also likely that increased bottling capacity is brought online in Ontario, with a bulk market for premium-priced Ontario maple syrup developed. This scenario is presented to illustrate the potential upside that is possible in this period of rapid market growth.

If the Ontario maple syrup sector is able to double its market share as expressed as a percentage of the total market, the result will be a sector that is generating farm gate receipts in excess of \$100 million per year within the next decade.

Under both these scenarios, the increased revenue to maple syrup producers across the province generates significant follow-on benefits, including increased employment and tax base in rural Ontario, increased income streams for Ontario farms, and the sustainable, high-value use of Ontario’s natural resources.

## H – Next Steps

As sugar season 2023 launches, the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers’ Association (OMSPA) is transitioning from the 2023-2028 strategic planning process to executing on this strategic plan. OMSPA has already or will shortly be engaging the Ontario and Federal governments on its vision for how to capitalize on this period of opportunity featuring rapidly growing maple syrup markets. Government support is needed for several key pillars in OMSPA’s strategic plan, including:

- The development of native applied research and training capacity focused on Ontario maple syrup production – the MART Centre
- The development of updated best practices materials for Ontario producers – a dedicated Best Practices renewal initiative, with training and educational resources to be delivered through the MART Centre

- The strengthening of the Ontario maple syrup brand – building on the Sweet Ontario branding through a multi-year marketing/branding campaign that will cement the association of Ontario syrup with superior quality and our sector’s rich history, with a special focus on introducing newer Canadians to the use of maple syrup.
- The renewal and strengthening of OMSPA itself, including updating OMSPA’s governance structure to reflect current best practices, strengthen
- Strengthening and clarifying the essential role of OMSPA locals in serving Ontario producers, and evaluating and refocusing the services delivered to members.

At the same time, work is needed within OMAFRA to re-build modest in-house regulatory expertise in the maple syrup sector. This is a necessary step to ensure a smooth interface between Ontario producers and the regulatory arm of the Ontario government.

And finally, OMSPA looks forward to a continued partnership with OMAFRA and the Federal Government on the collection and analysis of high-quality sector data, providing the essential groundwork for effective future strategic planning.