

Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association

**Strategic Plan
2018-2023**



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ACRONYMS

IMSI	International Maple Syrup Institute
MNRF	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry
NAMSC	North American Maple Syrup Council
OMAFRA	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OMSPA	Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association

1. **Introduction**

1.1 **Background**

The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association (OMSPA) was formed in 1966 with the vision to encourage the development, expansion, and improvement of the maple syrup industry in Ontario. OMSPA is a membership based organization, whose purpose is to support and lead the industry through an ever-growing, inclusive membership comprised of maple syrup producers from across the province.

OMSPA has done much since 1966 to meet its objectives and currently (2017) celebrates over 600 members. OMSPA has a long history of innovation, leading-edge research, and success in promoting the maple syrup industry in Ontario.

In March, 2017, the OMSPA Board of Directors initiated a review and update of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. The objective was to develop a new plan to guide the activities and planned results of OMSPA through to 2023. It was recognized by the Board that much of the 2013-2018 plan's content remained valid; and that the former plan could be used as a springboard to review and update the document in order to reflect the changing needs and priorities of maple syrup producers.

This Strategic Plan reflects the organization's direction as established and approved by the OMSPA Board of Directors. It is based on feedback through consultation with the broad membership, an electronic survey conducted in early April 2017, and a May 8, 2017 strategic planning workshop. The workshop was attended by 26 members from the Board of Directors and representatives from each of the OMSPA Locals.

Survey responses were received from 40 members, which provided an important reference document prior to the workshop. A detailed report was then prepared, and the information was used to identify and clarify priorities, key issues, priority actions, and goal champions going forward. The results are presented in this document.

1.2 **Objectives**

This Strategic Plan establishes strategic direction and priorities for OMSPA from 2018 through to 2023, including:

- ❁ A broad perspective detailing how OMSPA will meet the needs of its members;
- ❁ Organizational context to programs and activities that are currently in place;

- ✿ An analysis of current issues and priorities that need to be addressed in the near future (defined as five years hence);
- ✿ An outline of the anticipated priorities and actions that will flow from implementation of the plan, and;
- ✿ Guidance pertaining to future activities that should be the focus of OMSPA efforts at the provincial, local, and membership levels.

2. OMSPA Profile

2.1 *Operating Principles*

To help guide the development of this plan, a list of Operating Principles was reviewed and reaffirmed. These principles originated with the 2004-2008 Strategic Plan and remain valid. The Operating Principles are intended to provide OMSPA with clear direction for carrying out programs and activities. In summary, OMSPA believes in fully supporting its membership based on the following principles:

- ✿ Profitability of the industry;
- ✿ Application of new technology wherever possible;
- ✿ Maintenance of existing markets and marketing techniques;
- ✿ Growth of markets, by identifying and promoting new opportunities;
- ✿ Cooperation, support, and input from all sectors of the industry and government;
- ✿ Sound environmental practices;
- ✿ Sound sugar bush management;
- ✿ Application of best management practices in the operation and maintenance of maple syrup production facilities;
- ✿ Research and development projects to improve the production and marketing of maple products;
- ✿ Informing consumers about the nutritional and health benefits of quality maple products;
- ✿ Education and dialogue between maple producers across Ontario;
- ✿ Responsibility, honesty, integrity, respect, and good faith;
- ✿ Being an open-minded, friendly, networking organization;
- ✿ Supporting new members and interested youth through mentoring, and;
- ✿ Collaboration and partnership with indigenous communities where opportunities exist.

2.2 **Mission Statement**

The original 2008 Mission Statement was adapted and ratified as follows:

The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association (OMSPA) promotes a viable Ontario maple industry for producers; supports its members; and, ensures consumer satisfaction with quality, pure maple products, through ongoing education, research, and promotional activities.

3. **Vision 2023**

The following provides an overview of what OMSPA will look like in 2023.

3.1 **Membership Growth**

- ❁ OMSPA retains annual membership of 1,000 Ontario producers, who are members in good standing;
- ❁ Producers desire to be members of OMSPA to benefit both from the OMSPA "Sweet Ontario" brand and the membership benefits' package;
- ❁ OMSPA's brand receives broad exposure through its presence at farmers' markets, food shows, social media and other promotional activities;
- ❁ Producers are adopting high quality practices by accessing OMSPA workshops available across the province, and;
- ❁ The maple syrup production industry is growing.

3.2 **Government Influence**

- ❁ OMSPA government liaison work influences, organizes, and helps keep regulations up to date;
- ❁ Both provincial and federal governments recognize and support growth of the Ontario maple syrup industry;
- ❁ Government regulatory decisions are based on a respectful and consultative relationship, and;
- ❁ The government is our ally and partner, supporting the goal of quality products.

3.3 **Research**

- ❁ OMSPA provides members with the most up to date information regarding technology, tools, and techniques that can be used to make progressive improvements to maple woodlots and maple syrup operations;

- ❁ OMSPA remains current and provides over-arching advice on potential invasive species that threaten sugar bush health;
- ❁ Learning institutions and other research partners work with us to deploy and leverage their research funds and activities;
- ❁ OMSPA partners effectively with related organizations such as: Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resource and Forestry, Health Councils, IMSI, NAMSC, Ontario Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs, etc., and;
- ❁ OMSPA has access to, and benefits from, the application of research conducted at home and abroad, including French language research translated to English.

3.4 *Constitution and Governance*

- ❁ Members willingly volunteer for organization activities;
- ❁ Clear incentives are in place to encourage volunteer participation and commitment (e.g. social involvement);
- ❁ OMSPA tracks, evaluate, and celebrate our progress and success as an organization and a Board;
- ❁ OMSPA has excellent two-way communication with members;
- ❁ OMSPA and the Locals form a strong network that communicates effectively and works together cooperatively to meet the collective needs of the organization and its membership, and;
- ❁ Progressive ideas are channeled both internally with Locals and externally with OMSPA.

3.5 *Manufacturers, Suppliers and Producers*

- ❁ OMSPA has an annual forum that includes manufacturers and suppliers, at which dialogue between producers, equipment suppliers, and other interested parties occurs;
- ❁ The interests of manufacturers, suppliers, and producers are viewed as mutually supportive;
- ❁ OMSPA ensures that official liaison between manufacturers and suppliers are maintained with the OMSPA Board of Directors;
- ❁ OMSPA encourages industry to contribute to the OMSPA “green strategy” and environmental sustainability, and;
- ❁ OMSPA considers an Ontario based industry important to the overall success of the industry in Ontario.

3.6 Member Services

- ⚙️ OMSPA uses a planned mentorship approach for new producers and interested youth;
- ⚙️ OSMPA provides consistent, high quality service to members through on-going promotions, research extension, website interface, educational workshops, regular communication, and continuing OMSPA brand development;
- ⚙️ Members will enjoy the increased delivery of:
 - networking opportunities, particularly through internet social networking sites and related applications;
 - learning opportunities (e.g. Information Days, Website, Field Days, Quality Assurance, Beginners Workshops);
 - a broad range of membership benefits (pricing, retail benefits), and;
 - activities that build and support youth involvement.

3.7 Industry Growth and Marketing

- ⚙️ Ontario is securely situated as Canada's second-largest producing province, in terms of both actual quantities and reported level of production;
- ⚙️ Consumers actively exercise a purchasing preference for Ontario products;
- ⚙️ Ontario maple syrup producers have increased capacity to serve the Ontario market;
- ⚙️ OMSPA explores the potential of a large packing facility to accommodate the bulk market and supply the domestic needs in Ontario;
- ⚙️ producers have expanded opportunities to lease Ontario crown land, as well as municipal and Conservation Authority owned sugar bushes, and;
- ⚙️ Ontario is seen as both a North American and international industry leader.

4 Strategic Directions

4.1 Priorities

During the Strategic Plan development process, the following list of Strategic Directions was identified for the next five years. These are intended to guide OMSPA in the setting of priorities and to assist with the decision-making process. These include (in no particular order):

- ⚙️ Strengthened Organization
- ⚙️ Product Integrity
- ⚙️ Fiscal Strength
- ⚙️ Promotion and Marketing

- ⚙ Research and Technology Transfer
- ⚙ Government Influence
- ⚙ Brand Recognition

5. **Overarching Goals**

During the 5-year planning horizon for this Strategic Plan, OMSPA will begin with a focus on seven key goals which support the achievement of the Strategic Directions. Board committees will guide each of these goals through to results. As goals are achieved, new goals will be introduced.

Relevant committees have accepted responsibility to lead the achievement of strategic goals. Since May, 2017, all planning committees have met to ensure their goals are both specific and measurable in terms of the expected results that they will produce. These Action Plans are detailed, evolving, documents that can be accessed by contacting the respective committee chairs.

5.1 ***Goal 1: Strengthened Organization***

Increase the number of OMSPA members to at least 1,000 by May 2023. OMSPA places the highest priority on providing benefits and services to our members. There is continued improvement in consultation, interaction and collaboration between OMSPA, Locals and members. OMSPA is always positioned to provide advice and support to the membership.

Expected Results:

- ⚙ \$130,000 annual membership income;
- ⚙ Improved relationships and greater influence with government and various non-government organizations;
- ⚙ Greater understanding of governance best practices;
- ⚙ A strong, active, local and provincial volunteer base;
- ⚙ OMSPA credibility and recognition re: policy development, regulatory input, and dialogue on issues affecting the industry;
- ⚙ Improved access to innovative income-generating sources, and;
- ⚙ Recognition and practice of knowledge sharing that strengthens and benefits everyone.

5.2 Goal 2: Product Integrity

By December 2023, 100% of maple products sold will be in compliance with the best practices manual and meet regulated standards of integrity and quality.

Expected Results:

- ⚙ Validated best practices manual is in place, and all members have a copy;
- ⚙ Ontario producers are compliant with all regulatory requirements;
- ⚙ Increased consumer demand for Ontario maple products at a fair price to the producer;
- ⚙ Consumer requests for Ontario maple products are increasing;
- ⚙ Ontario maple syrup makes up an increasing percentage of the syrup sold on the Ontario market;
- ⚙ Improved ability of producers to manage their operations due to improved record keeping, and;
- ⚙ Fewer consumer complaints.

5.3 Goal 3: Fiscal Strength

By December 2023, a volunteer project management accountability framework is in place and includes developed policies that aim to support and guide the creative income-generating priorities of our project leaders and teams. We have sufficient income to support a professional leadership position to direct the operational imperatives of the Association.

Expected Results:

- ⚙ We are financially stable with a yearly operating reserve;
- ⚙ Our annual advertising and promotions budget has sufficient resources to adequately advertise and promote Ontario maple products;
- ⚙ OMSPA Board and staff are focused on priorities;
- ⚙ Member surveys demonstrate a high level of member satisfaction;
- ⚙ We have an effective process to track and manage our costs while providing guidelines for project management;
- ⚙ Annual balance sheet is consistently in the positive;
- ⚙ Board has a high degree of confidence in the reporting of actuals and assets;
- ⚙ Appropriate levels of professional support for the organization have been established;
- ⚙ Volunteer expenses are anticipated and compensated for in the annual budget;
- ⚙ The timely, scheduled release of financial information to the Board of Directors is in place;

- ❁ Sponsorship and partnership funding income is included as an anticipated funding source in our general accounts, and;
- ❁ OMSPA has a defined, transparent, operational budget with planning and delivery mechanisms in place that hold committees responsible to the Board and accountable to the membership

5.4 Goal 4: Promotion and Marketing

By March 31, 2023, we will implement a renewed marketing and promotions implementation plan, using the “Sweet Ontario” branding to increase sales at both retail and wholesale levels.

Expected Results:

- ❁ Increased use of maple sugar over other sweeteners, with supporting nutritional and health benefits information;
- ❁ Heightened brand awareness and recognition of the “Sweet Ontario” brand in the food industry market;
- ❁ Higher demand for Ontario maple syrup creates an increase in capacity;
- ❁ The value of maple syrup at point of sale/farm gate has been maximized;
- ❁ An effective promotional action plan is developed, implemented, and monitored;
- ❁ The OMSPA Store helps producers to promote the industry and has an accountable, interactive system of reporting successes and failures in its efforts;
- ❁ Dedicated Ontario infrastructure in place to effectively move Ontario product from producer to retail shelf, and;
- ❁ Creative, new strategies are in place that build sales through experiential events.

5.5 Goal 5: Research and Technology Transfer

OMSPA will facilitate access to appropriate knowledge and communications tools which members can use to make progressive improvements to their maple woodlots and maple syrup operations on an ongoing basis.

Expected Results:

- ❁ Members realize a financial benefit from the research and technology information that we provide;
- ❁ Members produce high quality maple products efficiently and effectively;
- ❁ Our improved planning processes proactively identify and deal with priority research needs;

- ❁ Improvements in membership woodlot management best practices and healthier sustainable woodlots are realized;
- ❁ Stronger North American collaborative research and technology networks which include recognition of Ontario’s established research priorities;
- ❁ Increased partnership opportunities are explored to advance objectives of OMSPA, and;
- ❁ Effective communication tools for providing members with information regarding new technologies and relevant industry information are in place.

5.6 Goal 6: Government Influence

By December 2023, OMSPA will be recognized as the voice of the maple syrup industry in Ontario.

Expected Results:

- ❁ Growing public confidence in OMSPA;
- ❁ Assisting Government in exploring international market opportunities;
- ❁ Heightened credibility with relevant governments and agencies;
- ❁ OMSPA and maple syrup producers receive government support to grow the industry;
- ❁ Membership grows as a result of our higher profile;
- ❁ Government funding is increased for research and development, quality assurance, and other identified concerns;
- ❁ Increased credibility at the International Maple Syrup Institute and the North American Maple Syrup Council;
- ❁ Government officials (including federal, provincial, regional, county and municipal) are calling us regularly for input and dialogue;
- ❁ Product quality control measures and practices continue at the highest level;
- ❁ Overall increase of engagement with key decision-makers in tourism, economic development, and health departments, etc., and;
- ❁ OMSPA is stronger and more representative of small and large producers across the Ontario.

5.7 Goal 7: Brand Recognition

OMSPA will nurture and enhance the “Sweet Ontario” brand to grow Ontario sales in the Ontario domestic market.

Expected Results:

- ❁ An expanded domestic market stimulates the sale of Ontario maple syrup;

- ❁ A significant portion of the syrup buying population professes trust for the OMSPA maple syrup brand;
- ❁ Greater brand recognition of “Sweet Ontario” bolsters members’ farm gate and bulk sales increases;
- ❁ New members choose to join OMSPA to benefit from OMSPA’s brand recognition;
- ❁ Ontario Government and other organizations endorse the “Sweet Ontario” brand and continue to promote the development and expansion of markets for Ontario maple products, and;
- ❁ Other Ontario food commodity groups utilize the “Sweet Ontario” brand in our collaborative marketing efforts.

6. **Implementation**

This plan was developed to provide OMSPA with a road map for our priorities and activities going forward. It will help the OMSPA Board and organization focus our efforts as we work towards reaching our Vision for 2023. In addition, as a volunteer organization, we all rely on the support of, and contributions from, our members. The success of OMSPA is a collective effort, so input from any member on the activities and direction of the organization at any time is not only welcomed, but encouraged.

We view this Strategic Plan as a living document that reflects the interests and needs of our members, so it will be modified and adjusted as priorities change over time. We have recognized and identified several emerging issues which will require our attention in the coming years. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- development of a Green Environmental Strategy and Action Plan;
- overall growth of the Ontario maple industry, and;
- development of strategies to increase the level of benefits to our members.

The board committees will prepare annual action plans to guide their actions for the upcoming year. These plans will be developed in support of the Strategic Plan and the Vision for 2023.



Maple Syrup A Nutritious and Natural Sweetener

