



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## FOR THE

### ONTARIO FOOD TERMINAL BOARD

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## 1. Message from the Board

Under the direction of the Chair, the Ontario Food Terminal Board has developed a strategic plan for the Ontario Food Terminal.

The OFT has been “identified as a provincially significant employment zone under A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.” Throughout the development of this strategic plan, the Board has sought to be responsive to the direction given by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness as indicated in the minister’s letter of direction along with the Memorandum of Understanding from the government to ensure that the strategic plan is aligned with the government’s direction. The board has created a Farmers’ Market tenants Advisory Committee and Warehouse tenants Advisory Committee that provide direction as to how the terminal can continue to move forward. In addition, those companies that buy at the terminal also provide input as to direction in how the terminal can move forward. This combination of groups providing direction to the Board ensures that the market is responding to the needs of the customers who use the terminal to either sell or purchase fresh produce or horticultural products.

OFTB Board is committed to using this strategic plan as a document to undertake and manage change in a constructive and proactive way. The Board has created two Committees, the Governance and Human Resources Committee and the Finance & Audit Committee. There have been changes to the Act and its Regulations and the creation of Protocols have been made to ensure up to date documents serving the operation of the terminal have been put in place.

The Board is looking forward to working with government and user-partners to continue the work on ensuring this is a functional market that serves Ontario Growers, Ontario Dealers, and Warehouse tenants who sell fresh produce and horticultural products at the terminal and to those Buyers who purchase at the terminal on behalf of the people of Ontario. This cooperative endeavour ensures this is a dynamic facility serving the people of Ontario.

Over the years the Board has provided major capital improvements to the terminal that were built when it was established that the users of these new facilities were able to pay the rents and users fees associated with the projects and that these rents and user fees were included in the approved Operating and Capital budgets.

The Board has made many attempts to construct a building for the Farmers’ Market tenants to sell their produce and horticultural products in a building as opposed to the out-door facility they currently have. Over the years the Board has made proposals on the size and format of such buildings and the prospective rents and fees that would be needed to cover the costs of the projects and each time a presentation was made the tenants clearly indicated to the Board that they could not afford the costs of the buildings. Since the Board operates on a self funding basis the proposals were terminated. However, the Board is continuing to pursue the proposal of creating a building/structure for the Farmers’ Market tenants knowing that the cost of the building/structure has to be covered in rental rates and fees charged to the occupants. As such any design has to take this into account.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 The Ontario Food Terminal Facility

The Ontario Food Terminal is a wholesale marketplace where about 4,000 registered buyers purchase from twenty produce wholesalers and more than 350 growers and dealers. Registered buyers include produce and flower retailers, restaurateurs, caterers, and jobbers (intermediaries who sell to restaurants, as well as to hospitals and other institutions).



Members of the general public are not admitted to the Ontario Food Terminal. About 400 different products are handled through the Terminal, from potatoes to bok choy to daffodils. The Terminal occupies 38.6 acres in Etobicoke, just north of the Gardiner Expressway and south of the Queensway. It consists of a large, U-shaped building containing up to 60 wholesale units and 50 offices, all of them leased out; a covered area used as

a farmers' market with 477 stalls also fully leased; a 100,000-sq ft cold storage facility; and acres of parking and loading space. More than 50 related services also occupy almost 25,000 sq ft of office space at the terminal for Farmers' Market and warehouse tenants, trucking firms, grower buyers and a bank. There are also two restaurants on site that serve workers and buyers.

The Terminal is run by a general manager and a staff of 46 and overseen by a seven-member Board of directors appointed by the Ontario government. The Board acts as a landlord for the physical space in the Terminal, and a manager of the facility to ensure it is a safe and efficient workplace for the movement of vehicles, power machines, forklifts and pedestrian traffic.

### 2.2 When and why was the Ontario Food Terminal created

Beginning in the 18th century, a produce and meat market operated on and around the site of what is now the St. Lawrence Market in downtown Toronto, close to the Great Western Station, since most produce came into the city by rail. As the market grew in size, its importance in setting prices also grew, so that transactions in the Toronto market affected produce prices from Halifax to Winnipeg.

By 1906, the market was already starting to overflow the available space, and the growing use of trucks to transport produce was causing traffic congestion on market days. Study after study was completed, but nothing changed, at least partly because the powerful railway interests opposed any move to a site that favoured the trucking industry. Finally, shortly after the Second World War, the provincial government stepped in. Concerned about public health and safety at the aging market building, as well as the difficulty of modernizing facilities in the original, cramped site, the government passed the Ontario Food Terminal Act on March 27, 1946, making the market a publicly owned facility.

In 1948, plans were drawn up for a new facility in Etobicoke (at that time the area was called Mimico). A site was chosen on land that had previously been used for market gardening and was close to highways and railway lines. The first section to open was the farmers' market, in 1951. However, construction of the main

facility was delayed because of post-war steel shortages. The Department of Defence signed the permit to make steel available only after the Toronto summer wholesale fruit market was destroyed by fire in May 1952. The wholesale terminal in Etobicoke opened in 1954. - *The Ontario Food Terminal: A Unique Asset in the Central Ontario Economy, Canadian Urban Institute*

### 2.3 Reasons why the OFT continues to be important to Ontario

The OFT plays a pivotal role in Ontario's fresh produce distribution ecosystem. The positive impact of this role includes the following points:

- The OFT serves an incubator for early-stage start-ups in fresh food merchandising as the rise of regional chains like *Longos* and *Starsky Fine Foods* attests – it is a unique marketplace where small vendors can get started and gain access to produce from all over the world in one place.
- The OFT enables fresh produce to be showcased for buyers to assess the quality and price while offsite warehouses/farms of major tenants provide additional capacity for handling product – the OFT impacts a far greater volume of trading than that which is physically traded at the facilities of the Terminal itself.
- The OFT provides an outlet for Ontario growers to market their products directly to a wide range of buyers in an efficient and accessible way including cash transactions that eliminate credit risk.
- The OFT does not require the scale that supplying major grocery retail chains requires and therefore contributes to innovation as growers of innovative products with small lots can use the OFT to move their product and to test new product introductions.
- The OFT serves a vital role in price discovery relative to constantly shifting supply and demand for product of a specific quality – the working premise is that this price discovery role keeps the price of produce down by checking the oligopolistic power that would otherwise be concentrated in the hands of few large buyers and is therefore beneficial to consumers and provides an important price discipline to the trade overall.
- The OFT contributes to optimization of value and minimization of food waste by providing an outlet where loads that are rejected by the originally intended customer can be resorted and resold.
- The OFT is a major employer in Toronto with a portion of the workforce relying on public transportation services to get to their jobs often at off peak hours.
- As a wholesale tenant cannot lease more than three units, there is an implicit check and balance in the system to ensure healthy competition among wholesalers and ample choice for buyers.

## 3. Our Vision – We aspire to be

A recognized global leader in facilitating wholesale distribution of perishable farm products enabling Ontario consumers the benefit of competitive prices and safe, high-quality supply year-round while providing Ontario farmers with an effective and efficient marketplace.

## 4. Our Mission – How we see our role

We facilitate the exchange of wholesale trade in perishable food products in a manner that is efficient, safe, competitive and responsive to market needs.



## 5. Our Core Values

We are committed to delivering outstanding service to growers, dealers, wholesalers, and buyers so that their businesses can thrive and grow.
We value the people we serve and employ, treating all with fairness and respect.
We conduct our business in an open, transparent and accountable way.
We hold sufficient reserves to provide for stability and confidence.
We deliver services that are efficient and cost effective.
We are independent of any commercial or political interest and therefore act only in the public interest.
We enable our customers, and therefore consumers, to access more products at lower costs than would be available if we did not exist.
We strive to anticipate future trends and needs for which we plan through consultation.
We proactively take steps to enable the volumes traded to grow.
We are good neighbours in our community.
We ensure the independent stores and food service companies have access to the market of fresh produce and horticultural products to ensure they have competitive pricing.
We provide Ontario Growers a wholesale market place in which they can meet the buyers and sell their produce.

## 6. The Minister's Direction

The letter of direction from Robert Flack the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness dated November 27, 2024 points out the following items they recommend to be included in Strategic Plan.

### 6.1 Innovative:

1. Simplify client/customer interactions.
2. Expand and optimize digital services offerings.
3. Improve Client/customer satisfaction.
4. Share Data with Supply Ontario to support data-driven decision making.

### 6.2 Sustainable:

- 1 Optimizing organizational capacity and directing existing resources to priority areas.

### 6.3 Use Public Resources efficiently:

- 1 Operate within Board's financial allocations.
- 2 Prudently and responsibly manage workforce size.

### 6.4 Accountable:

- 1 Develop outcome-focused performance measures to measure performance.
- 2 Protect data by actively managing data cyber security.
- 3 Report all high risks including effective mitigation plans.
- 4 Develop and encourage diversity.

### 6.5 Long Term Plans:

- 1 Develop a long-term asset management capital improvement and growth plan.
- 2 Increase collaboration and communication between Board, Government and Industry.
  - a. Strengthening partnerships with key industry organizations to promote Ontario grown.
  - b. Increase public communications on strategic significance of the Ontario Food Terminal including the significance of its location.

## 7. Tenant Advisory Committees

### 7.1 Members

The tenants in the Farmers' Market and the tenants in the Warehouse section of the terminal selected members for their committees. The Ontario Food Terminal Board selected a member of the Board from the Farmer Market and a member from the Warehouses to act as Chair of their respective committees.

### 7.2 Meetings

The Chair of each committee is tasked with setting up meetings of the Committees when there are issues that should be brought to the attention of the Committees to address.

## 8. Strengths/ Weaknesses / Opportunities/ Threats Analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS	
<b>Strengths</b>	<p><b>LOCATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The location is ideal for distribution to registered buyers, such as independent grocer and restaurant operators in the core of Toronto; these businesses require daily access to replenish their supply and efficient in-and-out times which the Terminal provides</li><li>• The location is connected to major transportation corridors enabling farmers, dealers and long-haul wholesale deliveries excellent access; the traffic flow of trucks in and out of the Terminal occurs at off peak hours thereby using highway infrastructure efficiently</li><li>• The location is ideal for the workforce employed at the Terminal, many of whom use public transit to commute to their jobs at the Terminal</li></ul> <p><b>MANAGEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Terminal is a proven model for efficient operations which keeps costs down while maintaining transparency and accountability</li></ul>

## SWOT ANALYSIS

Weaknesses	<p><b>LOCATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the Terminal was originally established at its present location over seventy years ago, there has been major construction of high-density residential units in the vicinity; this sharing of the space with non-commercial uses makes the Terminal’s industrial traffic and associated highway noise, which often occurs at night, less compatible with the neighbourhood. The Board is taking steps to ensure that it complies with any statute involving noise and as such is taking steps to reduce noise levels emanating from the terminal to ensure compliance. The only residential close neighbourhood adjoining the terminal is to the north of the terminal and efforts are underway including but not limited to a sound barrier wall along the Queensway side of the terminal to reduce noise coming from the terminal.</li> <li>• The facility is landlocked with a footprint that cannot be expanded; any future expansion will need to be planned carefully to make best use of available real estate – in practice, because the Terminal serves as a showcase for major wholesalers, several of which operate distribution facilities also off the premises, growth has not been constrained by the physical capacity limitations of the Terminal</li> <li>• The OFT does not have a detailed database to enable analysis of trends in the movement of product through its facilities –this deficiency arises because the OFT does not have the means to track volumes and kinds of products traded, as that information is proprietary to tenants and buyers, except in aggregate terms such as the movement of trailers</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<p><b>CONSUMER DEMAND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As <i>Canada’s Food Guide</i>, aligned with consumer trends, urges a shift to more plant-based foods and less dependency on animal protein in the diet, the demand for fresh fruit and vegetables will continue to grow, making the Terminal’s business highly relevant and necessary to consumers of the future.</li> <li>• The current trade issues with the United States involving tariffs are a clear signal that sourcing fresh produce and horticultural products is in question and should provide motivation to encourage and develop the grown in Ontario program which in turn will mean more reliance on the Ontario Food Terminal as a wholesale distribution facility for those initiatives.</li> </ul> <p><b>TECHNOLOGY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the ways in which consumers relate to food and source it changes, a distribution centre that is close to the greatest concentration of consumers in Canada and which is able to provide rapid replenishment under safe conditions is expected to be even more valuable and needed.</li> </ul>



## SWOT ANALYSIS

<b>Threats</b>	<p><b>FOOD SAFETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food safety risks can be managed by improving the requirements for standards of vendors using the Terminal as well as through advanced technologies like blockchain that improve traceability or technologies which can eliminate pathogens through less invasive forms of energy pulses. At present, buyers are driving the requirements for food safety from those that sell on the terminal and that is a high motivation for our vendors to comply with Food Safety standards. The Board's Cold Storage <u>meets the HACCP</u> food safety certification as do all our warehouse tenants.</li> <li>The OFT cannot be responsible for food safety after the food enters the distribution chain and leaves the premises of the Terminal.</li> </ul>
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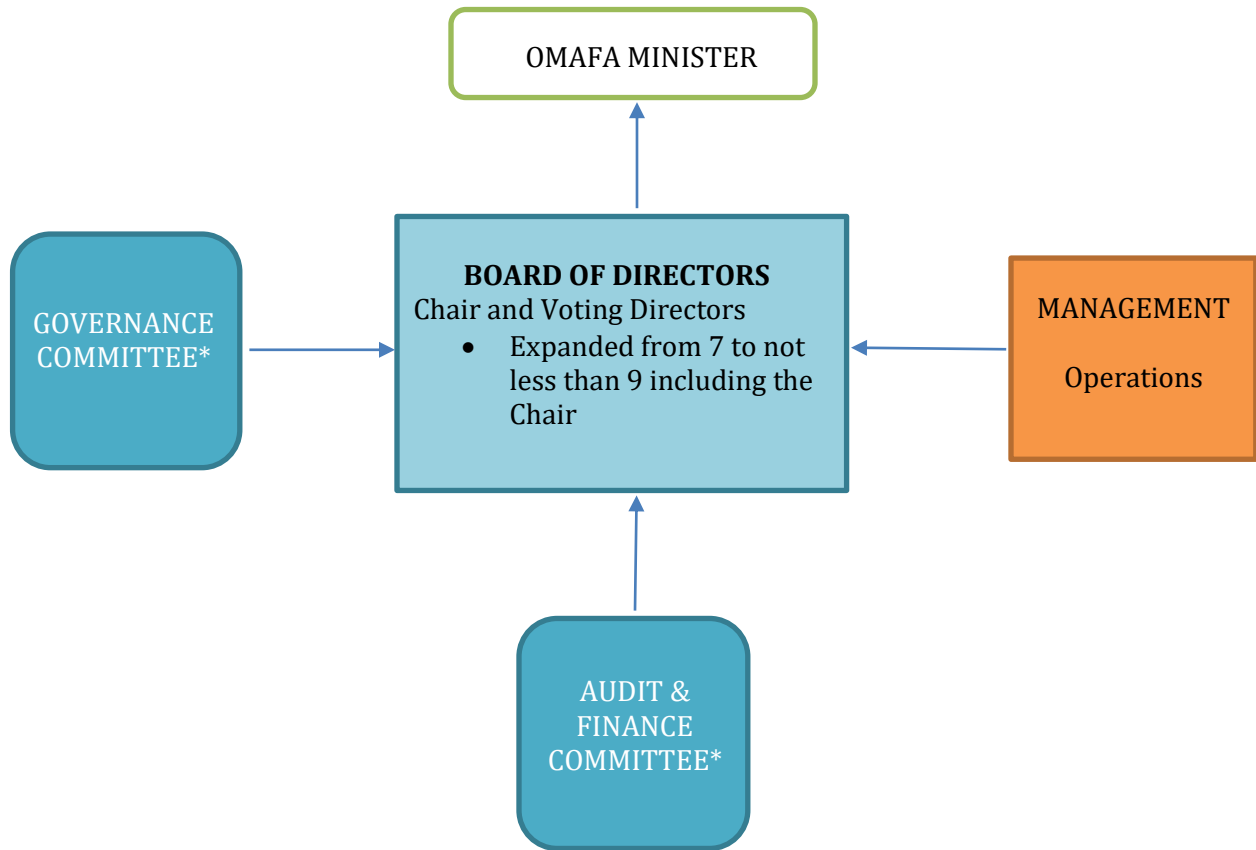
## 9. Strategic Goals and Actions

The Board addressed the task of developing the strategy by focusing the goals and actions to be taken around seven areas. These areas are of equal importance and are not ranked by priority. The Board also established target dates for implementation.

### 9.1 Governance

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?	Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
9.1.G1 The Board will achieve a high level of director engagement in strategy and policy while maintaining effective accountability from management for operations.	9.1.A1 The Board has formally constituted two permanent Board Committees (a) Governance and Human Resources Committee (b) Finance and Audit committee. Board committees are chaired by a board director who is not the Board chair and will meet quarterly or when meetings are needed.	Completed
9.1.G2 The Board will seek ongoing input from those who use the terminal to inform its decision-making.	9.1.A2 The Board has formally constituted a Farmers Market Tenant advisory committee and a Warehouse Tenant advisory committee who represent users engaged in activities at the terminal. The committees are chaired by a member of the Board who represents the groups.	Completed
9.1.G3 The Board will strive to anticipate and plan for future needs of the users it serves based on trends in the production,	9.1.A3 The Board will seek ongoing input from thought leaders in academia, government and industry, and from students studying food and/or business, to understand trends in the exchange of fresh food and	Ongoing

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?	Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
<p>distribution and consumption of fresh produce.</p> <p>9.1.G4 The Board will propose qualifications for directors and a process for selecting future directors for the Board with expanded membership from seven to at least nine so that the Board has an active role in Board succession planning while respecting that the final decision rests with government.</p>	<p>ornamental products as driven by such factors as consumer needs, technology advances, and structural changes in supply chains. The Board’s commitment to research related to anticipating the future and how it will impact the OFT will be reflected in sufficient allocation of resources by the Board, and, to the extent of OMAFA’s convergent interest, it will undertake research in collaboration with OMAFA and other stakeholders.</p> <p>9.1.A4 The Board will work with OMAFA on the selection of members to the Board. The Board wants to ensure directors have the skills needed to represent the needs of the OFT. The Board expects that it will be responsible for bringing forward recommendations for appointments to the Board and Chair for the Minister’s approval in fulfilment of its responsibility for succession planning for Board members.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



## Governance Model for the Ontario Food Terminal Board

\*Terms of reference for the two new Committees proposed have been developed and approved by the Board and are included in the Appendix to this strategy.

## 9.2 Human Resources

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?	Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
<p>9.2.1G The Board of Directors will ensure a highly competent, committed, and effective senior executive manager leads the management team with high standards of integrity and service. The organization will be known as an outstanding employer and be a place of choice to work.</p>	<p>9.2.1A. The Board will have the responsibility for annual performance and compensation reviews for the senior executive position consistent with the role and responsibilities.</p>	Annual
	<p>9.2.1A The Board will review management’s succession plan and executive development plan annually.</p>	Annual
	<p>9.2.1A The Board will specify that the General Manager meet with the OMAFA Deputy Minister Quarterly and with the OMAFA Minister together with the Board Chair Quarterly and report to the Board on the outcome of each meeting.</p>	Quarterly

## 9.3 Client relationships

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?	Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
<p>9.3.1G The Board will segregate and designate the farmers’ market area of the Terminal for selling only product grown in Canada. Imported product will be permitted to be sold only by wholesaler tenants.</p>	<p>9.3.1A The Board will encourage governments to require and enforce Canadian only product and country of origin disclosure on product packaging and to ensure Canadian only produce and horticultural products are sold in the Farmers Market.</p>	Future
	<p>9.3.1A The Board will request additional tools and authorities under regulation to assign tickets under the Provincial Offences Act in order to enforce compliance with the Canada-only requirement for the farmers’ market space.</p>	Future

## 9.4 Technology and systems

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?		Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
9.4.1G	The Board will embrace information technologies that enable it to fulfill its role in facilitating the trading of fresh products.	9.4.1A The Board will ensure it keeps up to date on changes in the industry for fresh produce by receiving maintaining membership and participation with the CPMA and OPMA trade associations.	Ongoing
9.4.2G	The Board will embrace energy efficient, low carbon footprint technologies that reduce emissions and noise levels while providing the energy required for cold chain management, lighting and movement of goods.	9.4.2A Not less frequently than once every five years the Board will direct management to undertake a comprehensive energy assessment to ensure that best in class solutions are utilized.	Ongoing

## 9.5 Capital Infrastructure

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?		Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
9.5.1G	After consultation with users, the Board will develop plans for, and proceed to build, an updated farmers' market that anticipates the future while enhancing food safety and efficient logistics.	9.5.1A The Board will obtain the necessary approvals to finance the construction costs of the updated farmers' market by issuing its own bonds and/or other appropriate means.	Future
9.5.2G	The design of the facility will anticipate future needs as fully as possible including greater use of electrically powered vehicles and a wider range of possible wares such as cheese and/or fish.	9.5.2A The Board will develop and conduct a competitive and fair process for allocating spaces to vendors of Canadian-grown fresh products.	Ongoing
9.5.3G	The external appearance of the OFT's property will be beautified and greened to enable better congruence with the community.	9.5.3A The Board has commenced improving the Queensway Property line by replacing some of the fence and is looking at new plantings to green up the area.	Ongoing
		9.5.3A The Board will investigate a noise barrier wall along portions of the Queensway that will help beautify the area.	2025

## 9.6 Regulatory Compliance

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?	Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
9.6.1G The collection of waste that needs to go to landfill will be reduced to the minimum.	9.6.1A Encourage our tenants to adopt sustainable waste management practices.	Ongoing

## 9.7 Marketing Strategy

Strategic Goal – what are we trying to achieve?	Strategic Action – how are we going to achieve it?	Target timeline
9.7.1G The Board will relentlessly drive growth in the trading of fresh products in order to maximize the input/output volume through its facilities in alignment with market needs and trends.	9.7.1A The Board will support flexible, intelligent and transparent supply chains in trading fresh produce by offering outstanding facilities that are efficient, safe, and accessible.	2030
9.7.2G The Board will invest in building its brand with particular focus on prospective (i.e. not current) users of the facility, both vendors and buyers, to promote the OFT as a valuable site for undertaking commercial exchange	9.7.2A The Board will work to encourage farmers to use the Terminal as an outlet for their produce and agricultural products.	2030
	9.7.2A The Board will improve its capacity to measure its impact and forecast needs.	2030
	9.7.2A The Board will undertake stakeholder relations to increase awareness of the OFT's valuable role and promote the opportunity to do business at the OFT to prospective stakeholders.	2030
	9.7.2A The Board, in cooperation with government, will undertake proactive government outreach to ensure public officials are well informed.	2030
	9.7.2.A The Board directs management to explore utilizing the visibility of the Terminal from the Gardiner Expressway for positioning additional signage which could be used either as an income source or as a means of promoting what the Terminal does.	2030



## 10. Alignment With The Minister’s Direction

	<b>Minister’s Direction</b>	<b>Plan Reference</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
1	Continue your work towards innovation improvements.	6.1	Work on simplifying customer interactions.
2	Work to ensure sustainability.	6.2	Ensure the facility meets the current and future needs of the current and potential new stakeholders.
3	Operate efficiently.	6.3	Work within financial resources.
4	Accountability.	6.4	Work to measure performance, manage cyber security issues and manage risks with a qualified workforce.
5	Long Term Plans by developing a capital improvement and growth plan, strengthen partnerships and increase public awareness of the strategic significance of the terminal especially the location of the terminal.	6.5	Work on continually reviewing the needs of the terminal based on growth and getting the message out as to the significance of the terminal and its current location.

# Appendices

## **Ontario Food Terminal Board Committees**

The Board upon recommendation of the Chair of the Board has established two committees. A Governance Committee and an Audit and Finance Committee. The committees are to be comprised of three Board members as appointed by the Chair of the Board, one of whom is to be Chair of the Committee. The Chair of the committees cannot be the Chair of the Board. No Board member can be on both committees.

Purpose of the Committees:

The Committees were established to ensure adequate time is provided for the Committee's to fulfill their particular responsibilities at separate meetings and subsequently this provides more time at Board meetings to pursue issues not directly involved with the Governance or Audit and Finance issues except when full Board approval is required for recommendations the committees present to the Board.

## **Governance Committee**

### **Terms of Reference**

The Governance Committee is tasked with the responsibility to review the following:

Ensure that the manager and directors of the Board are efficiently and economically complying with their duties as required in compliance with the Ontario Food Terminal Act, Regulations and Protocols, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister and with any Ministerial directives issued to the Board or any other statute of the Province of Ontario, Government of Canada or Municipal Government. If the Committee feels there is an issue where either a director or the manager is not in compliance, that the matter is to be brought to the attention of the full Board.

Ensuring that, to the best of their knowledge, there are no conflicts of interest on decisions made by either a Board member or the manager of the Board. If a conflict of interest is declared, that the member or manager does not participate on that particular item when it is presented at, either a committee of the Board or at a Board meeting. If there are issues, the matter is to be brought to the attention of the Board at their next Board meeting.

Provide the Board a draft Ontario Food Terminal Board Strategic Plan for their input and subsequent approval.

Ensure that those members on the Audit and Finance Committee are fulfilling their responsibilities as efficiently and economically as possible as outlined in their committee's purpose. If the

committee feels there is an issue with a member of the Audit and Finance committee or their own committee, that issue is to be brought to the attention of the full Board at the next Board meeting.

When sought recommendations as to the director qualifications for the Board, the committee is to provide recommendations as to what are the qualifications for required for the new Board members. The committee is then tasked with selecting or reviewing potential candidates to ensure the individual has potential knowledge in any one of the following areas. Knowledge of the food business, has experience in operating either farm, warehouse or a retail business, has an understanding of a wholesale business, understands the special requirements of working with government, has financial, marketing or property management experience.

The Committee is to ensure that they meet on a timely basis and that their recommendations are presented on a timely basis to the full Board for their review and possible approvals.

## **Audit and Finance Committee**

### **Terms of Reference**

The Audit and Finance Committee is tasked with the responsibility to review the following:

Review the interim quarterly financial statements and present their findings to the full Board for their approval.

Review the Audited Financial Statements as presented by the Auditor General and present their findings to the full Board for their approval.

Work with the Auditor General on any issues related to the audit of the Board.

To review any financial transaction presented to them for their approval.

To perform the initial review of major capital projects to ensure the project is viable and financially feasible enough to be presented to the full Board for their consideration. The committee upon their review may make a recommendation that they approve of the proposal and recommend the Board approve the capital item at the next Board meeting.

The Committee is to ensure that they meet on a timely basis and that their recommendations are presented on a timely basis to the full Board for their review and possible approvals.