

## 2024–27 Business Plan Highlights

Approved by the Board of Directors	January 26, 2024	_
	Date	
Approved by the Minister of Finance		
Original signed by	April 29, 2024	
Signature	Date	
The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy Minister of Finance		

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Ontario Financing Authority (OFA) is a Provincial Crown agency established by the *Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993*. The initiatives in the OFA's *2024–27 Business Plan* will focus on achieving the objectives set out in the Act and those set out in the OFA's letter of direction from the Minister of Finance issued November 21, 2023. The Business Plan covers a three year planning horizon. Initiatives for the 2024–27 Plan include:

- 1. Executing the Province's borrowing program including the Green Bond program, in a manner that minimizes Interest on Debt (IOD) costs over the term of the fiscal plan and beyond, while operating within prudent risk exposure limits and balancing, to the degree possible, the Province's debt maturity profile.
- 2. Managing the Province's debt, investments, Ontario Nuclear Funds and financial risk, and contributing to the development of the Province's fiscal plan and outlook including progress reporting on Ontario's debt burden reduction strategy.
- 3. Managing key financial relationships by building and maintaining connections with investors in both existing and new markets, as well as relationships with banks, financial service providers and investment dealers.
- 4. Providing cash management and banking services on a centralized basis to all ministries and ensuring that services are provided effectively.
- 5. Advising on, and implementing, corporate and electricity finance projects and policies by providing analysis and advice on cost-effective borrowing, investing and risk management activities undertaken by public bodies and other financing proposals, and on business cases for business supports.
- 6. Managing the availability, integrity, security and capacity of the highly customized and integrated financial systems and information technology environment to ensure the OFA and the Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation (OEFC) can deliver on their mandates.
- 7. Promoting and enhancing the OFA's cultural values. The OFA's People Plan outlines a guiding vision and purpose, aligning key priorities to maximize connection and engagement for current and future OFA employees.
- 8. Prioritizing digital transformation initiatives to better support digital collaboration, strengthen data use for decision making and reporting, and create efficiencies to better support growing business, Information Technology (IT) and cyber security demands.
- 9. Support the government on key strategic priorities, including the standing up and building out of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN**

#### **Economic Conditions**

Global economic growth expectations have continued to moderate as persistently elevated price inflation has prompted tighter monetary policy, including increases to central bank policy interest rates, in many countries.

Ontario's real gross domestic product (GDP) was unchanged in the third quarter of 2023, following an increase of 0.4 per cent in the previous quarter. As of the third quarter, Ontario's real GDP was 5.5 per cent above the pre-pandemic level in 2019Q4.

While Ontario experienced continued economic growth through early 2023, elevated interest rates and softening global demand conditions are weighing on the growth outlook in the short-term. Private-sector forecasters<sup>1</sup>, on average, project Ontario real GDP growth to slow from 1.1 per cent in 2023 to 0.4 per cent in 2024 before accelerating to 2.2 per cent in 2025, 3.0 per cent in 2026 and 2.5 per cent in 2027.

The future path of inflation remains a key risk to the outlook. In many countries, the cumulative impact of rising interest rates has begun to moderate price inflation. If there is a significant risk that this moderation will reverse, central banks may maintain tighter monetary policy for longer or tighten policy further. This represents a significant downside risk for global economies, including for the U.S. economy. Elevated interest rates also pose a risk to asset markets, including housing, as prices continue to adjust to reflect tighter monetary policy conditions.

Conflicts around the world could continue to disrupt the supply of key commodities and further elevate risks. Although supply disruptions have eased in recent quarters, they continue to pose a heightened risk to the global economy.

The United States is Ontario's largest trading partner, accounting for 78 per cent of the province's international merchandise exports in 2022. According to the survey average of leading business economists compiled by *Blue Chip Economic Indicators*, U.S. real GDP is expected to have increased by 2.4 per cent in 2023. Forecasters, on average, expect U.S. real GDP growth of 1.6 per cent in 2024 and 1.7 per cent in 2025.

Softening global demand and increasing production has helped global crude oil prices moderate. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil prices declined from an average of \$95 U.S. per barrel in 2022 to \$78 U.S. per barrel in 2023. Balanced market conditions are expected to help maintain the WTI crude oil price at an average of \$79 U.S. per barrel over 2024 through 2027.

The Canada-U.S. exchange rate declined from an average of 76.82 cents U.S. in 2022 to 74.10 cents U.S. in 2023. Private-sector forecasters expect the Canadian dollar to rise from 74.43 cents U.S. in 2024 to 78.10 cents U.S. in 2027.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Based on the average of private-sector forecasts as of January 9, 2024.

#### **Financial Markets**

High inflation has prompted central banks in many countries to raise policy interest rates. Between March 2022 and July 2023, the Bank of Canada raised its target for the overnight rate from 0.25 per cent to 5.00 per cent, contributing to higher government bond rates. The Bank subsequently maintained its target for the overnight rate at 5.00 per cent through the end of 2023 and has signalled that its cycle of interest rate increases may have peaked.

The Canadian three-month Treasury bill yield rose from an average of 2.3 per cent in 2022 to 4.8 per cent in 2023. According to private-sector forecasters, the Canadian three-month Treasury bill yield is expected to average 4.4 per cent in 2024 before moderating to 3.0 per cent in 2025 and 2.6 per cent in both 2026 and 2027. Private-sector forecasters expect the U.S. three-month Treasury bill yield to average 4.8 per cent in 2024, 3.6 per cent in 2025, 2.8 per cent in 2026 and 2.7 per cent in 2027.

The 10-year Government of Canada bond yield averaged 3.3 per cent in 2023. According to private-sector forecasters, the 10-year Government of Canada bond yield is projected to average 3.4 per cent in 2024, 3.3 per cent in both 2025 and 2026 and 3.5 per cent in 2027. Private-sector forecasters expect the 10-year U.S. government bond yield to average 3.9 per cent in 2024 and 3.7 per cent in 2025, and 3.5 in each of 2026 and 2027.

#### **Government Initiatives**

The OFA will support the government in the standing up and building out of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank.

Ontario is updating its Green Bond Framework. The update will allow for a greater breadth of potential bond offerings in the future.

The OFA will continue to provide loans to public bodies in support of government initiatives.

The OFA will also provide financial analysis and advice as required, including the Province's investments in its business enterprises, and analysis and advice to reduce costs, enhance efficiency and maximize value.

### **Regulatory Compliance**

The OFA will ensure that information required to be disclosed by the Province in its debt securities offerings related documents, periodic published reports (including the Ontario Budget, the quarterly finances, the Public Accounts and the Fall Economic Statement) and other disclosures filed or submitted under applicable securities legislation, rules and regulations in the United States, Luxembourg, Australia and Switzerland is filed on time and otherwise in accordance with those requirements. Regulatory requirements will be monitored continually to ensure the Province has ongoing access to these markets.

#### **COMMUNICATION PLAN**

#### **Business Plan**

The OFA Business Plan serves as an internal tool for management and staff in the development of program plans and, through the regular reporting of the status of initiatives to the Board of Directors, it serves as a performance measurement tool. The plan also communicates the OFA's business objectives to the Minister of Finance and MOF.

#### **OFA People Plan**

The OFA's People Plan provides strategic direction and vision to maximize connection and engagement for current and future OFA employees, and serves as a guide for transformation by aligning key priorities with people and culture experiences at the OFA.



#### **Other Communications**

The OFA has a number of external stakeholders, including institutional and retail investors, investment dealers, banks, and credit rating agencies. In 2024–27, the OFA will communicate with the public and stakeholders using various methods including:

- 1. Websites (including expense information): <a href="www.ofina.on.ca">www.ofina.on.ca</a>; <a href="www.ofina.on.ca/algp">www.ofina.on.ca/algp</a>;
- 2. Budget, Fall Economic Statement, Public Accounts and quarterly updates;
- 3. Fact sheets, investor relations presentations, Green Bond Newsletter, CEO Video Updates, and other investor materials (available on the OFA's website, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter));
- 4. Annual Report;

- 5. Regulatory filings; and
- 6. Business Plan;

Other methods of communication to be used throughout the year include investor relations meetings and regular discussions with credit rating agencies.

#### 2024-27 OBJECTIVES

Key objectives for 2024–27 are listed below. The OFA will continue to adapt and address any issues that may arise related to ongoing economic uncertainty.

- 1. Execute the Province's borrowing program including the Green Bond program
- 2. Manage the Province's debt, investments, Ontario Nuclear Funds and financial risk, and contribute to the development of the Province's fiscal plan and outlook including progress reporting on Ontario's debt burden reduction strategy
- 3. Manage key financial relationships
- 4. Provide cash management and banking services on a centralized basis to all ministries and ensuring that services are provided effectively
- 5. Advise on and implement corporate and electricity finance projects and policies
- 6. Manage the availability and security of the information technology environment necessary to deliver on the OFA's mandate
- 7. Continue transforming the work environment in support of the OFA's cultural values
- 8. Prioritize digital transformation initiatives
- 9. Continue to support the government on key strategic priorities, including the standing up and building out of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank.

#### MANDATE AND GOVERNING LEGISLATION

The OFA is a provincial Crown agency established by the *Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993*. The Act sets out the objects of the OFA. The OFA:

- conducts borrowing, investment and financial risk management for the Province of Ontario (the Province);
- manages the Provincial debt;
- manages the Province's key financial relationships with investors, financial institutions, rating agencies and public bodies;
- provides centralized financial services for the Province including banking and cash management;
- advises ministries, Crown agencies and other public bodies on financial policies and projects;
- assists Crown agencies and other public bodies to borrow and invest money;
- acts at the direction of the Province in lending to certain public bodies;

- invests on behalf of some public bodies;
- with Ontario Power Generation (OPG), manages the investment activities of the Ontario
   Nuclear Funds; and
- carries out the day-to-day operations of OEFC and provides a broad range of financial services to Infrastructure Ontario.

In addition, the OFA's objects include:

- providing such other financial services as are considered advantageous to the Province or any public body; and
- any additional objects as directed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

In pursing its mandate, the OFA is committed to its core values of respect, innovation, teamwork and accountability.

The Financial Administration Act also sets out certain financial powers which OFA employees exercise on behalf of the Minister of Finance to carry out the Province's borrowing, manage the Province's debt and invest its liquid reserves.

# OVERVIEW OF CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: 2024–27

Activities will focus on supporting the strategic directions listed below.

1. Execute the Province's borrowing program including the Green Bond program

The OFA endeavours to ensure that borrowing by the Province and the Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation (OEFC) is cost-effective, operated within prudent risk exposure limits and balances the Province's debt maturity profile. As of the 2023 Fall Economic Statement (FES), total long-term public borrowing is forecast at \$34.7 billion for 2023–24, \$37.4 billion for 2024–25 and \$37.0 billion for 2025–26. It is a core part of the OFA mandate to complete the borrowing program and manage the risks that may arise from the global economy /market developments.

#### **Implementation Plan**

- Meet the Province's funding requirements in as cost-effective and prudent manner as is possible in the current economic and fiscal environment.
- Continue to monitor the Green Bond market to identify future issuance opportunities under the Green Bond Program. Ontario continues to be a leader in the Canadian dollar Green Bond space and will continue to collaborate with other provinces/ issuers such as the Federal government (Finance Canada) in implementing their Green Bond program. Ontario is updating its Green Bond Framework. The update includes better alignment of framework categories with the Green Bond Principles through standardized wording, as well as the expansion from green to sustainable to allow for a greater breadth of potential bond offerings in the future.
- Complete regulatory filings with the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC), Luxembourg Stock Exchange (LuxSE), Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) and any other applicable securities regulator. Conduct due diligence conference calls, as required, with the dealers and underwriters of the Province's debt securities offerings and their legal counsel.
- 2. Manage the Province's debt, investments, Ontario Nuclear Funds and financial risk, and contribute to the development of the Province's fiscal plan and outlook including progress reporting on Ontario's debt burden reduction strategy

The OFA manages the debt and liquid reserve portfolios, and centralized/segregated investment funds, for various public bodies, and jointly manages the investment activities of the Ontario Nuclear Funds with OPG. Financial risks associated with capital market activities are mitigated by adhering to prudent risk management policies which minimize financial risk by ensuring exposures and losses remain within approved limits. Risk management policies and program exposure limits are reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors on a biennial

basis. The OFA also contributes interest-on-debt (IOD), borrowing, debt management and total and net debt objectives and forecasts, and electricity sector fiscal impact projections to the Budget, the Ontario Economic Outlook and Review (Fall Economic Statement) and other quarterly financial updates; in addition to providing final results for Public Accounts. It also contributes updates related to progress on Ontario's debt burden reduction strategy to the Budget and Fall Economic Statement.

#### Implementation Plan

- Generate IOD savings from liquid reserve investment activities within prudent risk exposure limits, as well as centralized/segregated investment funds, for various public bodies.
   Manage the Ontario Nuclear Fund investments, working together with OPG.
- Ensure interest rate, foreign exchange and credit exposures are within approved policy limits.
- Contribute to the Province's annual Budget, Fall Economic Statement, Public Accounts and
  quarterly finances, including the electricity sector outlook; advise on the potential impact of
  fiscal scenarios and initiatives on IOD, total and net debt and debt sustainability ratios
  (including net debt-to-GDP, IOD-to-revenue, and net debt-to-revenue), borrowing
  objectives, credit ratings and financial markets' reactions. Continue playing an important
  role in the development of the Province's annual Budget, Fall Economic Statement
  (including the debt burden reduction strategy) and quarterly statements through the
  provision of timely and accurate financial information.

#### 3. Manage key financial relationships

The OFA ensures investors and the financial community in Canada and abroad receive financial updates on a timely basis to make informed decisions about Province of Ontario debt securities. Investor Relations activities support borrowing program objectives by maintaining and broadening the Province's investor base. The OFA also ensures credit rating agencies understand government policies, budget, and fiscal performance, properly reflecting these factors in their reports and rating decisions.

The OFA manages the government's relationships with financial institutions, primarily the major Canadian and global banks, their investment dealer subsidiaries, and custodial and fiscal agents. This involves the acquisition and oversight of cost-effective products and services for the Province and certain Crown corporations.

#### Implementation Plan

- Support the Province's borrowing program by building and maintaining relationships with
  investors in existing and new markets. Provide Investor Relations information products,
  including updates to the OFA website, and the OFA social media channels, on a timely basis.
- Maintain close relationships and ongoing dialogue with credit rating agencies to keep them informed of the Province's financial status, priorities, and initiatives.
- Manage Ontario's relationships with banks, financial service providers and investment dealers.
- Liaise with Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (OAGO) staff to obtain the Auditor General's consent to use the Independent Auditor's Report in the Province's offering documents and financial disclosure documents filed with international securities regulatory authorities, in accordance with assurance standards in the CPA Canada Handbook.
- Implement and maintain collateralized swap agreements with bank counterparties to limit potential financial losses as a result of a credit event.
- Manage changes in financial and regulatory reform, liaising with regulators and legal counsel, as required.
- 4. Provide cash management and banking services on a centralized basis to all ministries and ensuring that services are provided effectively.

The OFA provides centralized banking and cash management services to the Province. The effective provision of these services allows for the efficient delivery of provincial services and contributes towards minimizing IOD expenditures. The OFA is responsible for settlements, payments and accounting/reporting functions associated with the Province's and OEFC's debt management programs, as well as OFA and OEFC financial reporting.

#### <u>Implementation Plan</u>

- Implement cost effective and efficient banking solutions geared towards increasing the
  effectiveness of collections and disbursement processes for ministries and their agencies.
  On the revenue side, this encompasses implementing tools such as cheque imaging,
  corporate bill payment and the Interac Request to Pay solution. Regarding disbursements, it
  involves broadening the utilization of prepaid cards, Electronic Funds Transfers (EFTs), and
  extending Interac e-transfers usage. Adopting electronic payments will contribute to the
  reduction of high-volume, low-complexity and routine paper-based processes.
- Ensure that the Province has sufficient cash available at all times to meet its financial obligations, particularly in light of borrowing programs that exceed \$30 billion per annum.
- Maintaining OFA's dedication to adhering to the Payment Card Industry's Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) remains a priority. The objective is to ensure the completion of mandatory external reviews, keeping the Province's compliance up-to-date with all data security standards mandated by the PCI Council.

- Collaborate with the merchant services provider to collectively assess the viability of
  introducing new value-added card products and cutting-edge technologies for the Province.
  Maintain ongoing collaboration with industry associations, payment service providers,
  provincial, and federal jurisdictions to advance on payment modernization efforts
  customized for the unique challenges within the public sector. Continue the delivery of
  timely and accurate settlement/payment services for the Province and OEFC, including
  OEFC power supply contract settlements.
- Continue to work with the Office of the Provincial Controller to provide feedback on Chapter 2 of the OAGO Annual Report that deals with Ontario's Public Accounts.
- Continue to monitor and assess any new accounting developments of national and international accounting setting bodies that affect reporting for the Province and its agencies. Provide advice to the Provincial Controller and external accounting oversight bodies on how changes to accounting standards would affect the Province's debt and IOD.

#### 5. Advise on and implement corporate and electricity finance projects and policies

The OFA provides financial modelling, analysis and advice to MOF, other ministries, OEFC, Crown agencies, and other public bodies, on financial policies and projects, electricity sector policies and initiatives, and borrowing from capital markets. The OFA also provides assistance in structuring and completing financial transactions, and securing and using private sector financial advisers. The OFA will continue to work with MOF, other ministries, and Infrastructure Ontario to support and facilitate the implementation of government initiatives, as required.

#### **Implementation Plan**

- Develop interest rate and other borrowing, investing and risk management policies, and advise ministries, agencies and public bodies on interest rates and other financing issues.
- Provide advice to ministries, agencies and other public bodies on cost-effective borrowing, investing, credit enhancement strategies, and risk management by public bodies, including on the OFA loans to public bodies program, and assist with structuring financial transactions as required.
- Provide support to the government on MOF loans and loan guarantees as required.
- Provide advice on transactions requiring a provincial guarantee or those that may otherwise increase the indebtedness or contingent liabilities of Ontario.
- Support analysis and advice on government initiatives including business support proposals for Ontario's various industry sectors.
- Continue to work closely with Venture Ontario staff on approaches for managing the Province's investment in the Ontario venture capital sector.
- Provide advice as required on evaluating the Province's assets, including investments in its business enterprises.

- Provide financial advisory services to ministries and government agencies to support governance, analysis, and implementation of key policy initiatives.
- Provide policy and financial analysis, and implementation, as required, for policies and initiatives related to the electricity sector that could have fiscal, financial and/or economic implications for the Province and/or OEFC.
- Provide financial due diligence and advice to the Minister of Finance on applications received under the Aboriginal Loan Guarantee Program (ALGP) to facilitate Indigenous equity participation in electricity infrastructure projects.
- Provide loan administration services to the Ministry of Energy for a \$1.3 billion Provincial loan to support a project connecting 16 remote First Nation communities to the Ontario electricity grid.
- Monitor and provide electricity sector fiscal and financial projections for the Province and OEFC, including analysis and advice to the Minister of Finance on OEFC's revenues and expenses, financial position and debt outstanding, as well as continued reporting on OEFC's revenue sources and expenses, and management of Non-Utility Generator (NUG) contracts.
- Provide analysis and advice to support the effective administration of the Ontario Nuclear Funds Agreement (ONFA) and other initiatives related to nuclear liabilities, including advising on OPG's proposed ONFA Reference Plan update, and monitoring and reviewing OPG's on-going implementation of its ONFA obligations, approval of yearly ONFA budgets, and monitoring the value of the Nuclear Funds in connection with the CNSC's financial guarantee requirement.
- Provide analysis and advice on existing, new and refurbished nuclear supply, financing and cost recovery issues, including for nuclear liabilities.
- 6. Manage the availability and security of the information technology environment

Reliable and secure information technology is essential to the OFA's ability to deliver its mandate. The OFA's financial business functions are supported by Information Technology Division's (ITD) technology infrastructure, providing high-availability, integrity, security, and performance capacity at a competitive cost. ITD can effectively deliver and maintain state-of-the-art financial systems and services because of OFA's internal management of information technology.

#### <u>Implementation Plan</u>

- Provide a highly available technology environment capable of supporting a 99.98 per cent annual uptime during normal business hours.
- Continuous monitoring of systems availability, capacity and performance.
- Regularly conduct vulnerability and critical patch management processes.
- Promote a culture of cyber security at all levels of the organization through continued communications, user security awareness, partnerships and enhancements to technology.

- Continue to strengthen cyber security program through established risk based roadmap aligned to modern cyber security framework(s).
- Continuously modernize and enhance systems to mitigate technology risk.
- Pursue solutions that support compliance and efficiency of OFA processes.
- Review, conduct tests and update the OFA's Corporate Business Continuity Plan (BCP) framework by incorporating lessons learned.
- Optimize and enhance resiliency of remote and hybrid work solutions.
- Review the security environment, in partnership with the internal audit team, by continuing to conduct regular cybersecurity penetration testing and periodic reviews of the cyber security program and IT general controls as part the annual internal audit plan.
- 7. Continue transforming the work environment in support of the OFA's cultural values

Building on the OFA's adoption of its core values of Respect, Innovation, Teamwork and Accountability (RITA), the OFA's inaugural People Plan (the "Plan") was officially released in September 2022. The Plan represents OFA's first comprehensive people strategy to help staff reach their full potential by shaping a workplace that emboldens our core values.

#### Implementation Plan

- The OFA's People Plan (formally known as the ONE OFA People Plan), the OFA Equity,
  Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Work Plan and the OFA EDI Advisory Panel, recognize the OFA
  as a community of valuable individuals who make important contributions towards our
  mandate and focuses on three aspirations:
  - 1. We are one team of diverse professionals, led by accountable and transparent leadership, working towards a shared vision.
  - 2. We believe in investing in everyone's learning and development in order to thrive in our current roles and prepare us for future opportunities.
  - 3. We recognize the future of work is here and we must actively modernize to remain one step ahead and build resilience towards change.
- Continue to build capacity for tomorrow's workforce through the Student Engagement Committee for OFA co-op students and through the Capital Markets Division rotational Development Program.
- Promote the OFA Innovation Lab as an opportunity for employees to build capabilities and a mindset for innovation through workshops and training while providing an outlet for open conversations.
- Continue with the multi-phased organizational rejuvenation that began in February 2023 to modernize the OFA's work and culture. The renewal focuses on key areas related to workplace culture, learning and development, career advancement and succession planning.

#### 8. Prioritize Digital Transformation initiatives

The OFA plans to accelerate digital transformation initiatives to better support collaboration, strengthen data use for decision making and reporting, and create efficiencies to better support growing business, IT and cyber security demands.

#### Implementation Plan

- Prioritize future state transformation initiatives to provide modern collaboration tools and new capabilities for the business to deliver on its mandate.
- Embrace a cloud first approach, which will include a data strategy, for IT solutions and services to reduce ongoing operational overhead costs towards establishing and maintaining a resilient and sustainable IT program.
- Augment capacity constraints with contracted services to accelerate change.
- Explore AI opportunities such as generative AI, machine learning, and integrated cloud service offerings to enhance or automate business processes.
- Educate staff at all levels on how AI works, its impact on the workforce, and awareness of state-of-the-art developments in AI.
- 9. Continue to support the government on key strategic priorities, including the standing up and building out of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank (OIB)

#### <u>Implementation Plan</u>

- Provide the OIB with initial operational and onboarding supports to enable the entity to transition to an independent operational model.
- Collaborate with Ministries and government agencies to help build potential project pipelines for the OIB.
- Work with Ministry of Finance to support necessary government approvals and implementation of governance and accountability frameworks.

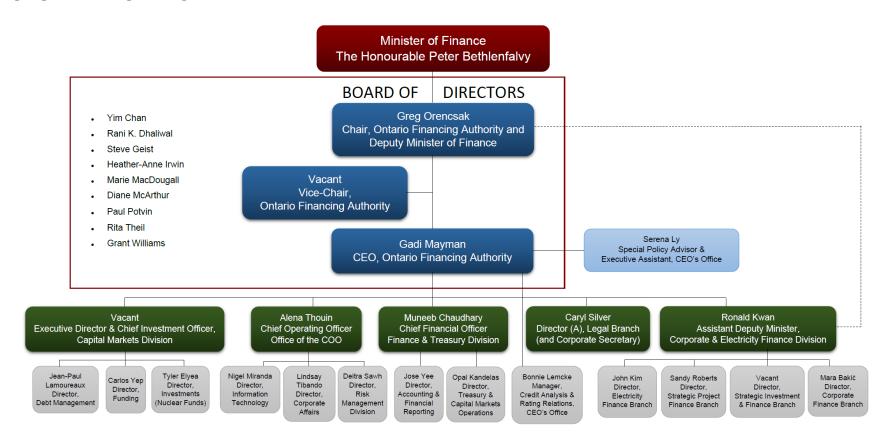
#### INITIATIVES INVOLVING THIRD PARTIES

As described in the Business Plan, the OFA has several active relationships with third parties for the purpose of delivering on its mandate.

Ontario Financing Authority

Business Plan 2024–27

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



Note: Membership on Board Committees is specified on the website As of January 8, 2024