

TORONTO FERRY SERVICE

OPERATIONAL REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

Report Summary
2025-03-05



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Introduction & Approach

The City of Toronto has retained Greenline Marine Inc. to review the City's ferry system¹ with an aim to strengthen the structures, processes, and governance involved with asset planning, operations, and user experience. Overseen by the City of Toronto's Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services on behalf of the City Manager, the work involves an organizational review and discussion of the current state of operations and assets of the ferry system. Greenline Marine has endeavoured to undertake this review based on industry best practices, research, information gathering, and discussions with key internal stakeholders.

INDUSTRY CONTEXT. Ferry systems across Canada are grappling with drivers of change affecting many sectors, which include digital transformation, climate change, demographic shifts, and inflation. In addition, some of the industry-specific challenges faced by ferry operators in Canada include:

- **Evolving regulations.** The *Canada Shipping Act, 2001*, represented a significant transformation in the regulatory framework governing Canadian vessels. As new regulations continue to be introduced under this legislation, compliance requirements for vessel operators and stakeholders continue to evolve.
- **Global seafarer shortage.** Ship operators in Canada and around the world have had difficulty building a skilled workforce amidst a global seafaring shortage.
- **Fleet renewal.** Ferry operators are embarking on large-scale fleet renewal projects, with a strong emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts.
- **Social drivers.** Contemporary ferry services are expected to meet evolving societal expectations for equity, accessibility, and modal integration—which the original infrastructure, created many decades ago, may not have been designed to provide.
- **Technology.** Traditionally, ships relied on analog systems and written logs. As ferry systems adopt more advanced technologies, the risk of cyber threats increases.

This is a critical time to address these core challenges and create a stronger ferry system for the future by making key adjustments in how the organization is structured and governed. Through this time of change, it is important to maintain a ferry-specific lens, characterized by the longevity of assets, the unique nature of each vessel, regulatory complexity, specialized workforce, and limited supplier base.

¹ The scope of this review is the ferry service operated by the city that delivers service between the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal and the three Toronto Island docks. The scope does not include the Toronto airport ferry, or non-city ferries.

Current State

HISTORY, PURPOSE, & SIGNIFICANCE. Currently Toronto Island’s regular ferry service is under the division of Parks and Recreation. Toronto’s ferry system is legislated under *Toronto Islands Residential Community Stewardship Act, 1993, S.O. 1993, c. 15*. Through their long history serving the people of Toronto, however, the ferries have become more than simply a means for transportation. They also hold a recognized cultural and historical significance.

SERVICE PROFILE. The Toronto Island ferry system connects the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal to the Toronto Island docks at Ward’s Island, Centre Island, and Hanlan’s Point. The sheltered water crossing of the Inner Harbour is about 2 kilometers, or 1 nautical mile in length, and the voyage duration is about 10-15 minutes. Toronto’s ferry system operates year-round with service levels adjusted on a seasonal basis to align with fluctuating ridership demands. As measured by carriage of passengers, the route from the Toronto mainland to the combined Toronto Island docks ranks as Canada’s seventh busiest ferry service, and for peak summer days, the throughput of the system ranks amongst the top four routes in Canada.

EXISTING FLEET. The fleet consists of five aging vessels, including four primary ferries and one heritage vessel. The vessels are the Sam McBride (which entered service in 1939), Thomas Rennie (1951), William Inglis (1935), and Ongiara (1963), alongside the heritage vessel Trillium (1910). The ferries are diverse in their composition, with full load carrying capacities between 220 and 915 passengers, and operate with crews of between 9 and 13. In 2024, the ferry service had annual operating expenditures of \$11.2 million, with a further \$3.2 million in drydocking expenses. All assets are owned by the City of Toronto, and the service is delivered by its employees.

MISSION/ VISION. The mission of the City of Toronto is “To serve a great city and its people”, and the mission/ vision of Toronto's Parks & Recreation division, under which the ferries operate, is “To provide safe, accessible, and beautiful parks and recreation facilities that support the city’s social and environmental resilience. The division’s vision is to “create active spaces that inspire participation, meet resident needs, and strengthen communities.” Currently a mission and vision that speaks directly to the ferry service does not exist.

TERMINAL & DOCKS. Responsibilities for the terminal and docks used by the Toronto Island ferry system are divided between different management groups. The Jack Layton

Ferry Terminal, located on the Toronto mainland, falls under the jurisdiction of the Capital Projects Design & Delivery branch, separate from the Marine Operations Unit. Multiple stakeholders have an interest in the terminal's operations and future development. Smaller incremental improvements to the Jack Layton Ferry terminal are planned this year, while discussions continue on opportunities for larger-scale improvement and/or replacement. Condition assessments of the terminal are conducted every few years. The three docks on Toronto Island—Centre Island, Ward's Island, and Hanlan's Point—are managed by the Marine Operations Unit. In summer, all three docks are used, but during winter, service is directed to Ward's Island only. These simple facilities are visually inspected by staff, but currently, there is no system of third-party assessments.

EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE. The organization that operates Toronto Island ferry service is the Marine Operations Unit, contained within the City's Parks & Recreation Division which resides under the administration of Community and Social Services. The Marine Operations Unit is deeply nested in the City's structures, and all leadership above the Supervisor have a broad portfolio and a wide span of control for which they hold accountabilities. In total, there are three reporting layers from the top-most ferry specific job to the Division's General Manager, and five to the City Manager. All ferry staff – both shipboard crew, and shore side staff – report to the Supervisor of Marine Services.

EXISTING ROLES & WORKFORCE. The City's ferry service, operated by 153 employees in peak summer season, saw a significant staffing increase in 2024 on account of newly imposed Transport Canada crewing requirements which came into effect in December 2023. As a result, staffing levels in the Marine Operations Unit were increased from 63 to 112 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions – a 77% increase, with further increases planned for 2025. Recognizing that ship operators in Canada and around the world have been stretched to recruit and retain a skilled workforce amidst a global seafaring shortage, the City's hiring efforts for these additional credentialed seafarers should be recognized as a commendable recruitment effort in a very challenging labour market. With the exception of Captains, who are excluded from the union, both shipboard and shore side staff belong to one of two branches of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE): the Toronto Civic Employees' Union, Local 416 (CUPE), and CUPE Local 79.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT. Under new *Marine Safety Management System Regulations* released in July 2024, Transport Canada requires that Canadian domestic commercial vessel adopt a Safety Management System (SMS), with phase-in periods dependent on the classes/types of vessels. Based on the fleet's size, composition, and capacity, the City of Toronto will be required to meet the "Class 2" SMS standards (a relatively high standard),

seek certification by the first Safety Inspection Certificate renewal after July 2025, and fully implement the SMS within six months. Under the Director, Parks, work is currently underway with the intention of having that SMS reviewed by the Classification Society/ Recognized Organization by March 2025. The plan involves preparing an inventory of existing documents to assess current resources and identify gaps; preparing a standardized procedure template and a document control process; updating documents to align with SMS standards; clarifying roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities; and creating a training record management process.

SECURITY. The City's Corporate Security team has been involved in the development of the terminal security plan, and its approval. In accordance with the plan, they also provide a resource, a Senior Security Coordinator, to oversee the terminal security measures, and the guards. Currently, the Designated Ferry Facility Security Officer is assigned to the Supervisor, Marine Services. The vessel security plans are managed by the Marine Operations Unit themselves. Security drills are conducted annually with Ports Toronto, and all training meets regulatory requirements.

ASSET MANAGEMENT. The City of Toronto has a diverse range of infrastructure assets, with a replacement value of \$94 billion across all its asset types. Via Ontario Regulation 588/17: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure, the City of Toronto, is required to have an asset management plan for the assets it controls. The City makes use of the State of Good Repair (SOGR) concept, which means an asset is in the condition to be used for what it's meant to be used. As far as asset maintenance and preservation of the ferries is concerned, the Marine Operations Unit's Marine Coordinator oversees the maintenance with support from the Unit's marine engineers. Currently, the City of Toronto does not have a comprehensive process of condition surveys for the Toronto ferries. Most maintenance is undertaken through contracts with external service providers.

FINANCIAL. In 2023, the ferry service incurred around \$16 million in expenditures, representing less than 0.1% of the City's operating budget. Every year, the budget is right-sized based on a previous year's spending. Between 2016 and 2023, operating expenses have ranged from \$6.6 million a year to almost \$16 million a year, and by far the most variable cost is drydocking (which includes maintenance), which alone has ranged from under \$0.4 million to almost \$7.5 million.

FERRY USERS. There are several user groups of the City's ferries. One principal group of ferry users, residents of the Toronto Islands. These residents rely entirely on the Toronto Island ferry service as their lifeline to the mainland, connecting them to the city for work,

healthcare, shopping, and other essential activities. Residents make regular use of the ferry and also bring in their own circles of guests, contractors, and support workers as needed. Residents take an interest in the ferry service, and have extensive experience to draw upon. While the City engages with residents on a number of issues, engagements specific to the ferry service have been uneven. A related group of ferry users includes those operating businesses and institutions on the island. The final major group for ferry users, visitors, can themselves be divided in several groups ranging from one-time visitors to Toronto who include an excursion to the Island as part of their stay, to residents of Toronto who regularly travel to the Toronto Island Parks.

The "Ferry Passenger Experience Initiative" is an ongoing initiative to better understand and improve the ferry passenger experience to and from Toronto Island, especially during peak travel times. Amongst various project components (increasing shade, wayfinding), the initiative, includes Engagement & Research in the form of a public engagement survey, and ongoing feedback mechanisms.

COMMUNICATIONS. For receiving updates about the ferry, the City provides some updates via the City's website and has an email alert system for people who sign up. Various third -party websites also reproduce information about the ferry service. We understand that the City is developing a communication and stakeholder engagement plan for the ferry system.

MEDIA COVERAGE. The media coverage of Toronto's ferry system incorporates a mixture of positive promotion, critical accountability, and reporting of data and updates.

GOVERNANCE. For the most part, the Marine Operations Unit has authority to make day - to -day decisions regarding the ferry system. For more significant issues, ferries are commonly represented at three committees – all with distinct mandates that intersect with the City's ferry system: the General Government Committee, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee, and the Economic and Community Development Committee and decisions made by those Committees are brought to Council for adoption where required.

FLEET RENEWAL. In 2024, the City of Toronto awarded a \$92 million contract to Damen Shipyards for two electric ferries scheduled for delivery in 2026 and 2027. The vessels include one passenger-and-vehicle ferry and one passenger-only ferry, both designed for higher capacity and operational efficiency. Parks and Recreation (Capital Projects) is the City's lead for managing the project.

Upgrades to the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal are required to support the new vessels. The updates include automatic shore charging systems, battery energy storage systems, and modifications to berthing areas. Shoreside improvements are scheduled between 2024 and 2026. As directed by City Council, the design and tendering of the shoreside infrastructure improvements is being led by the Toronto Port Lands Company (TPLC), a wholly-owned Corporation of the City of Toronto, and part of CreateTO. TPLC is responsible for overall project management and construction delivery of the shoreside infrastructure, in close partnership and coordination with the City on the fabrication and arrival of the vessels. All of the work related to the introduction of the City's new ferries is overseen by a Ferries Steering Committee, led by the City's most senior staff to ensure the work is well-integrated, coordinated and being delivered on schedule. This Committee is supported by an Integrated Project Team chaired by TPLC and includes representation from Parks & Recreation and others.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATE. A review of the current state of the City of Toronto’s ferry system reveals that while the system either meets regulatory minimums or is consistent with broad policy requirements, there remain significant opportunities for improvement relative to ferry industry norms and best practices. These are identified in the table below.

	Compliant with regulatory minimums or consistent with broad policy	Somewhat consistent with ferry industry norms	Fully consistent with ferry industry norms	Best/ leading practice within the ferry industry
Asset management	Yes	Yes	No	No
Safety management	Yes	Yes	No	No
Organizational structure	Yes	No	No	No
Strategic guidance	Yes	No	No	No
Career development	Yes	Yes	No	No
Stakeholder engagement	Yes	Yes	No	No
Internal/ external communications	Yes	Yes	No	No

In sum, our review of the current state suggests that the City’s approach towards asset and safety management of the ferry system are currently compliant with all regulatory requirements and somewhat consistent with industry norms. However, these areas fall short of achieving full consistency with broader ferry industry standards or attaining best-in-class practices. Our assessment shows that while the system is operating generally consistently and safely, there is room for growth. Addressing these opportunities is the subject of the next section.

Discussion & Recommendations

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Effective asset management is important for any ferry service, and particularly important for the City of Toronto at this transitional period when replacing an aging fleet with new technologically advanced vessels is vital for the sustainability of the system.

While the roles related to asset management are documented within several existing job descriptions, we also understand that many inspection, refit, and maintenance activities are outsourced, and the formal processes for triggering, scoping, assigning, monitoring, reporting, and documenting of contracted work are not necessarily clearly defined. Based on our current understanding, there may be some ambiguity in this process, which can lead to unintended gaps in which no clear level of accountability exists. It is encouraging to see that major capital renewal efforts have been given appropriate attention from senior levels of leadership through a Steering Committee, and a similar degree of structure and focus should be applied to regular asset management.

By marine industry standards, the basic components of an asset management program are a system of regular vessel condition surveys undertaken by independent third parties, and a preventative maintenance program. The introduction of a systematic condition-based asset management strategy of vessels, terminals, and docks should be considered a priority to maximize the impact of the City's recent funding commitments and ensure they are supported by a long-term program of quality controls and sustainable systems. Performance metrics, or levels of service, are essential to effective asset management and provide a systematic way of justifying necessary investments.

The asset management plan for Toronto's ferries should be considered in relation to an assessment of risk, informed through the requirement of high-quality data provided through independent periodic condition surveys undertaken with appropriate regularity. The asset management plan should include clear objectives and goals specific to the ferry system. It should also define reporting standards and frequencies. Resulting from this work, recent financial commitments from the City of Toronto towards the ferry system should be coupled with a detailed maintenance and refit plan, with an understanding of the risks addressed, target levels of service, what needs to be done, who will undertake the work, when it will be undertaken, and where work will be conducted.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop an asset management plan specific to the City's ferry system, including the vessels, shore side infrastructure and terminal that reflects the nature, functionality, and life cycle of marine sector assets and incorporate the work of the vessel integration/acquisition for the new electric vessels.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SMS)

We understand that development of the SMS is underway, and although the City's approach appears to be sufficient for meeting Transport Canada requirements, there's also an opportunity to expand that work into something that will provide greater value for years to come. An SMS has potential to comprehensively align marine organizations to safety, and includes functions, roles, procedures, risk and hazard identification / mitigation strategies, and reporting relationships to the highest levels of management. For the City of Toronto, the new SMS requirement is an excellent, timely opportunity to strengthen key areas of the City's ferry operations. The development and implementation of the SMS is a significant undertaking that will likely require additional one-time resources, including for the roll-out to crew members. Once certified, the SMS will create a new set of obligations and accountabilities for the organization – and if enthusiastically embraced, will be a driving force to create more alignment and cooperation among management and crew. Above all, a safety management system is an opportunity to build a safety culture.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Deploy the necessary resources required to create a robust Safety Management System per upcoming new requirements from Transport Canada, driving enhanced procedural review, training standards, and safety reporting.

RAISING THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

To successfully meet Transport Canada's requirements, the City of Toronto will need to augment the resources and expertise solely dedicated to the ferry service and adjust its organizational structure. Elevating the organizational structure of the ferry system within the City of Toronto is one of the fundamental recommendations of this review.

We propose that the responsibility of the "Authorized Representative" (as required by Transport Canada) be assigned to a senior executive with the authority to approve and/ or re-allocate resources. A senior executive serving as the Authorized Representative would

send a strong signal to Transport Canada that regulatory compliance is sufficiently important to the organization to justify the attention of an individual at a high level of authority who has the ability to allocate financial resources as needed.

We also propose that a new executive lead position be created that is specific to the ferry service who would be responsible for the ferry system as a whole. Based on the level of accountability required, we anticipate this would be a Director-level position (i.e. reporting to a Division Head). This position would serve as the central leader for the ferry system. This position oversees the entire ferry system, acting as the primary liaison to the Division Head and staff whose roles are dedicated to the ferries. This position is responsible for developing long-term policies, guiding public engagement, and building partnerships for capital projects. This position also acts as the division's representative in council meetings, marine organizations, and regulatory bodies, ensuring the ferry service's interests are well-represented. This individual would be named "**Ship Manager**" (as required by Transport Canada). Given the anticipated responsibilities, they would need to be a dedicated marine professional with recognized industry qualifications. The Director would engage with the Canadian Marine Advisory Council, the Canadian Ferry Association, along with the City's task groups and committees as needed.

It is proposed that several new Manager positions be created focused on ferry service operations/ assets, including assignments in relevant groupings. Suggested divisions include:

- **TERMINALS & PASSENGER EXPERIENCE:** Manages passenger facilities, ticketing, and ferry user relations. The Terminal and Passenger Experience pillar will be led by a Manager, with supervisor support overseeing the cashiers, ticket collectors, and cleaners.
- **VESSEL OPERATIONS:** This pillar is focussed on shipboard crew, vessel operations, and adherence to regulations, policies, and procedures. Shipboard operations will be led by a Port Captain, with two supervisors overseeing the Masters reporting to him/her.
- **SAFETY & TRAINING:** Focuses on internal audits required by the SMS, crew training, and emergency preparedness. The safety pillar will ensure the implementation of the safety culture across the entire ferry organization. It will be led by the Designated Person Ashore (DPA), who will have a direct link to highest executive levels. Under the DPA, will be an Internal International Safety Management (ISM) auditor who will perform annual safety ISM and OHS audits, and a Training Coordinator.

- **FLEET RENEWAL, REFITS & REPAIR:** Manages vessel upgrades, maintenance, and capital renewal projects. The Fleet Renewal and Refit pillar will be responsible for the integration of the new builds and the planning of the annual vessel refits. It will be led by the Ferry Asset Manager, with the Ferry Vessels Supervisor (Capital), Ferry Fleet Integration Supervisor, and a refit team.

Several new Supervisor positions would be required and would report to the Managers. The principal focus of the Supervisor role would be on supervising, scheduling, or monitoring the front-line staff. We appreciate that the introduction of these new positions will be prioritized but completed over time and subject to resource availability and budget approval where required.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Elevate the Marine Operations Unit, establish a marine chain of command, and assign accountabilities for City executives.

OPERATIONS

Clear goals and expectations are the foundation of any successful service delivery system, and best practice among Canadian ferry operators – whether standalone entities or part of larger transportation agencies – is to articulate those intentions through a mission statement supported by principles and aligned guidance. Ferries need a set of specific, intentional, and tailored guiding principles. A robust mission statement creates a stronger ferry service in several ways. First, a mission statement specific to the ferry service **supports strategic long-term planning** for the fleet by identifying the investments of greatest value, and by establishing a proactive stance on refits, repairs, and improvements. Second, a mission statement helps to efficiently and consistently **navigate decision-making** through competing interests. A mission also **fosters a cohesive workplace**, building a culture with common purpose, ensuring that staff are directed on where to contribute effectively. And ultimately a mission **builds trust** through the establishment and achievement of measurable outcomes that stakeholders value, such as operational safety, ferry service reliability, and overall ferry user satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Institute a clear mission and vision that is consistent, long-term, and specific to the ferry service.

To address current and anticipated staffing challenges, the City of Toronto must adopt a more proactive approach to developing the next generation of its ferry workers. Potential ideas might include career pathing, mentorship program, and support for training.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Develop crew recruitment and retention strategies, and clear pathways for internal management and talent development.

USER EXPERIENCE

Toronto's ferries are relied upon by a wide variety of stakeholders. While the City maintains an ongoing relationship with the residents and the role these ferries play within the community is featured within the 2020 Marine Use Policy and the Toronto Island Park Master Plan, there is no formal, regular engagement process dedicated to supporting the successful operations of the ferries. In addition to ferry users, external groups such as PortsToronto, Waterfront Business Improvement Area, Waterfront Toronto, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, as well as Emergency Response providers all have unique and critical perspectives on the role of the City's ferry system and, from time to time, require varying degrees of engagement and consultation about the service.

The introduction of two new electric ferries into the Toronto Islands ferry fleet provides an ideal opportunity to establish the Toronto Islands Ferry Engagement Forum. A Toronto Ferry Engagement Forum—or a similar stakeholder group—could bring together users and other key voices to focus on specific areas of service and operations that align with the city's goals. This engagement forum would offer valuable insights, share experiences, and provide feedback to help guide decisions made by the ferry operator and organization.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Establish a Ferry Engagement Forum or leverage existing structures for regular stakeholder feedback and strategic input.

There exists an opportunity to increase the information available to the public online that describes the fleet in general, the individual ferries, their size, age, size/capacity, and staff complement, as well as the federal regulations that are in place and adhered to, which ensure safety and reliability of the service. While scheduling and fare information are necessary, there is also an opportunity to highlight information about the highly trained and

skilled crew, supported by a dedicated shore management team as well as the City of Toronto's efforts and commitment to renew this historical and essential transportation system that provides a safe and reliable service to and from one of city's most popular parks, recreation, and tourist attractions.

A strategic communications plan could be an essential tool that aligns messages, fosters engagement, and drives organizational goals. The purpose of the plan needs to be clearly stated, following and aligning to the overall mission of the ferries (see Recommendation 4). Prioritizing communications about key safety procedures and addressing emergency management activities ensures confidence and fosters trust in the system.



RECOMMENDATION 7

Create a strategic communications plan for Toronto's ferry service with clear goals, audiences, messaging, and actions that support the safety, reliability, and modernization of the organization.

Implementation Plan

STAGING AND PHASES

Our most resource-intensive recommendation to the City involves scaling up the Marine Operations unit by introducing a new chain of command with several additional management levels. Since hiring and onboarding multiple management levels simultaneously would be impractical, a phased approach is necessary to transition from the current structure to the proposed one. Given that hiring each new position could take between three to six months, fully implementing the three-tiered management structure may take up to two years. We appreciate the introduction of these new positions will be prioritized but completed over time and subject to resource availability and budget approval where required.

Throughout this entire process, change management expertise is essential to support organizational unit through the generational renewal.

CONSIDERATIONS ON MAKING THE MOST OF A SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A Safety Management System needs to be embraced as a critical pivot from the current to the future state for Toronto's ferries. Through an SMS, ferry-specific policies, procedures, training, audits, and drills can all be formalized. The new SMS provides an opportunity to improve Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), formalize a training program, and implement an industry-leading safety reporting system.

The roll out of the SMS to the crew is a vital change management component, ensuring broad support from the front line staff. In order to successfully implement this recommendation, we recommend that the SMS be launched through workshops with the crew, led by marine leads, and with involvement by City leadership to underscore the importance of the work. The topics should cover the reasons, rationale, and logic of the safety management system, stepping through the content of the SMS, and providing examples and anecdotes to illustrate key points.

CONSIDERATIONS ON BUILDING AN ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The City does not require or need to develop a new ferry asset management plan from scratch. The collection of data, and the life cycle costs are the key aspects of a plan. We recommend the following key steps as a roadmap towards embedding asset management practices:

1. Beginning with condition surveys, create a comprehensive asset inventory on a centralized repository.

2. Conduct regular condition assessments.
3. Define asset management objectives and engage stakeholders.
4. Establish performance measures and levels of service.
5. Define life cycle management strategies.
6. Create a risk management framework.
7. Develop preventive maintenance plan.
8. Create an asset management plan to optimize budgeting and resource allocation.
9. Mobilize and communicate plans.
10. Leverage the right technology.

CONSIDERATIONS ON DEVELOPING A MISSION/ VISION/ SERVICE PLAN

To develop a mission and vision specific to the Toronto Islands ferry service, the City can begin the process by gathering input from stakeholders, including ferry users, ferry employees, and community groups, along with senior City executives and elected representatives. This process could involve workshops and the review of feedback on the current service's performance and challenges. Additionally, the City could also seek expert insights from professionals in maritime transportation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issues and opportunities. Next, the City would define priorities by identifying key objectives for the ferry. These priorities would be informed by stakeholder input and aligned with broader municipal goals. From these objectives, the City would next draft a mission statement that clearly articulates the purpose of the ferry service. A complementary vision statement would outline the long-term aspirations of the service, such as becoming a leader in zero-emission, community-centered ferry operations. The draft statements would then be refined through a collaborative process. Finally, the City would implement and communicate the finalized mission and vision statements. These would be formally adopted and integrated into operational service plans, policies, and communications. Staff and leadership would be trained on how these guiding principles shape their work, while the public would be informed through various communication channels such as the City's website, at ferry terminals, and through community outreach efforts.

CONSIDERATIONS ON ASSEMBLING A FERRY ENGAGEMENT FORUM

A Ferry Engagement Forum would not be a legal entity and would exist solely to advise and support the delivery of a safe, reliable, affordable and well-managed Toronto ferry system. A terms of reference would establish a core set of criteria, objectives, scope, and functions for the Forum to work within. Selected forum members would include individuals from a variety of sectors and communities engaged in ferry use and activities. Senior political and

operational staff involved with the day to day oversight of the ferry service would meet with the forum at scheduled intervals to be determined but could also engage with the Forum on matters of special interest throughout the year, for example leading up to and including the launch of the new electric ferries, new docks and the process of decommissioning of existing legacy vessels.

CONSIDERATIONS ON DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Develop a strategic communications plan that builds on establishing a vision and mission for the Toronto Ferries. The process would involve identifying key goals and objectives for the year as well as highlighting key deliverables, audiences and specific tactics and/or events anticipated throughout 2025 and 2026. A thoughtfully created communications plan is inclusive of all aspects of the organization and its current state. The plan should be shared with all key staff and stakeholders to inform and encourage their engagement in identifying issues, actions, key messaging and activities.

CONSIDERATIONS ON BUILDING A RECRUITMENT & RETENTION STRATEGY

To develop an effective recruitment and retention plan, we suggest hiring a human resource professional or engaging with the City's internal HR department to provide a comprehensive analysis of the workforce demographics, with an estimate for years to retirement for each position in the system. A succession plan identifying any high-risk positions, training requirements, opportunities for building capacity and laddering into key roles would be beneficial for long term planning. This data will inform the priorities for staffing key positions, hiring and a career development program. The City's existing partnership with Georgian College is the foundation upon which a comprehensive career pathing strategy can be built.

CONSIDERATIONS ON PLACEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT

Wherever the Marine Operations Unit may reside under the City's structure (Parks and Recreation Division or otherwise), we suggest that the unit will always need to be given distinct consideration, given the unique profile of a ferry system: long-lived assets, a strong regulatory environment, a highly specialized and certified workforce, a very limited supplier base for equipment and maintenance, the very public face of "normal operations", and the equally important but often unseen "emergency operations". The ideal placement for the Marine Operations Unit is the one that has the capacity to make allowances for its unique operations, provides a direct line to authority for approvals, and has officials experienced with highly regulated operations. The basic principles / framework that the City should consider in determining where the unit should reside includes:

- **ASSET MANAGEMENT:** The division should have a strong framework for managing long-lived marine assets, including proactive maintenance, lifecycle management, and replacement strategies to ensure operational reliability and cost-efficiency. This approach must be tailored to handle the specific challenges of marine infrastructure and equipment.
- **REGULATORY COMPLIANCE:** The unit must be placed within a division that has a deep understanding of and capability to navigate the complex regulatory environment specific to marine operations.
- **SPECIALIZED SKILLS AND CERTIFICATION:** The division should have experience managing a workforce that requires high levels of specialization and certifications, ensuring that staff qualifications meet the unique demands of marine operations.
- **OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY:** The placement should allow the unit operational autonomy with a direct line to senior decision-makers for quick approvals and responsive action to changing conditions

Conclusions

Toronto's ferry service is recognized as a cultural icon and a legislated transportation link for residents and visitors of Toronto Island, what has been less recognized is that the service has amongst the highest passenger throughput of any ferry routes in Canada. While fully appreciating all the efforts that go into meeting the very significant ridership demands on a day-to-day level, new external drivers to the marine industry such as generational fleet renewal, new Transport Canada regulations, and a global seafarer shortage require an enhanced focus on the service and new strategies to meet those external drivers. Because of the importance of the system to Toronto, acknowledging its prominence in Canada's ferry industry, and for a variety of external drivers, there's never been a better time to reinforce Toronto's ferry system with a solid foundation.

One common undercurrent through all findings and recommendations is that Toronto's ferry service is a significant service and warrants due attention. A second common theme is that although Toronto's ferry service is adequately working at a functional level, it would greatly benefit from a more strategic approach to operations. A final theme is the ferry industry requires special consideration, and plans and processes need to be specific to the marine industry.

This report outlines a clear and actionable path for the City of Toronto to transform its ferry system during this important time for Toronto, and the ferry industry in general. By adopting the proposed recommendations, the City can ensure that its ferry operations are well-positioned to provide safe, reliable and accessible transportation for generations to come.

Throughout this process, Greenline has been consistently impressed by the dedication, diligence, and cooperation of management, staff, and crew, who have been responsible for delivering service during a particularly challenging time for ferry operations in Canada. Recognizing the dedication and hard work of the people who keep it running every day, we are confident that these recommendations will help drive meaningful improvements to the system in the years ahead.