



**MANITOBA'S
TOP EMPLOYERS**

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MANITOBA'S **TOP** EMPLOYERS

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TOP EMPLOYERS RAISE THE BAR

By Geoff Kirbyson

It's getting easier and easier to have a baby in Manitoba.

But, wait — it's not what you think.

More than half of the companies on the Manitoba's Top Employers list offer maternity leave top-up to new mothers and precisely half make paternity leave top-up available to new dads.

That's not all. Two companies, RAPID RTC, a software developer specializing in the automotive and agricultural sectors, and insurance giant Canada Life offer in vitro fertilization subsidies to employees who can't conceive naturally. RAPID RTC's subsidy is up to \$15,000 while Canada Life offers \$3,000.

And two more employers, Manitoba Hydro and Roquette Canada, which operates a massive pea protein plant in Portage la Prairie, offer adoption assistance. Hydro's benefit tops out at \$10,000 while Roquette offers \$500.

"Those types of benefits were unheard of 14 years ago, when the Manitoba competition was launched," said Tony Meehan, founder and president of Mediacorp Canada Inc., which organizes the annual Canada's Top 100 Employers project. The program is in its 20th year nationally and its 14th in Manitoba.

Meehan said the editorial team at Mediacorp doesn't get tired of scouring the country looking for employers with interesting stories of doing things differently in their industry or region.

"Each year, companies bare their souls to us. We have about 400 data points, including maternity leave, vacation allowance, training and a host of other factors we consider," he said.

Here's how the Manitoba competition works: each employer is reviewed on eight criteria — physical workplace; work atmosphere and social; health, financial and family benefits; vacation and time off; employee communications; performance management; training and skills development; and community involvement. The criteria are the same as the national competition and have remained consistent since the project was launched two decades ago.

Then they're given an internal grade before being sorted for the national list by industry and region. Employers are compared to peer organizations in their field to determine which offer the most progressive and forward-thinking programs.

For individual provinces such as Manitoba, the winners are listed alphabetically.

One thing the Top Employers can't be accused of is failing to do its research. Each year, it writes nearly one million words in publishing its reasons for selection, explaining why each of the winners was chosen.

While family-related benefits are relatively new, investing in your people isn't. In fact, it's pretty much a must.

"If you don't, you might be the next industry that's overtaken by rapid technological change," he said. "Talented employees improve the chances that an organization can respond to rapid technology change. Employers in fields as divergent as retail and banking are looking at the 'Uberization' of other industries and saying 'we need the top people working for us' to make sure we're the ones driving change, not the ones being left behind."

Different things matter to different people at different stages in their careers. When you're young, tuition subsidies and mentorship programs are at the top of your list. For example, a lot of employers give bonuses for getting a professional accreditation. During the early family years, it's the maternity leave top-up, vacation and time off that keep your employees happy.

Later in your career, options for phased-in retirement are some of your top priorities.

"No employer has all of this. We try to single out the ones that lead their industry," Meehan said.

Many years ago, the focus of employee benefits were financial. Today, Meehan said, a big part of the overall picture is social. After all, many people spend more time with their co-workers than they do with their families.

"If you create a workplace where people like to come to work and they form friendships, it's tough to leave an employer like that. If you combine that with challenging work and the feeling you're on the cutting edge, that's usually enough for most people," he said.

Not surprisingly, companies that make the grade for the Manitoba's Top Employers list tend to shout it from the mountaintops because it helps with both recruitment and retention.

"It's hard to get on the list. You've got to knock off somebody pretty good," Meehan said.

"A lot of these companies build spreadsheets and go through the Manitoba list and figure out what the best companies are doing and then try to emulate it. These folks push the bar higher."

DURING THE EARLY FAMILY YEARS,
IT'S THE MATERNITY LEAVE TOP-UP,
VACATION AND TIME OFF THAT KEEP
YOUR EMPLOYEES HAPPY.

PERKS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG FOR TOP EMPLOYERS

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

Flexible work options are very much here to stay because the technology driving this revolution is no more likely to go away from our working lives than it is from our personal lives.



If you're wondering how your workplace could become one of Manitoba's Top Employers, go visit your company's nap room to recharge and we're sure you'll come up with some much-needed recommendations.

What's that? You don't have a nap room? Well, that didn't take long.

Nap rooms are most definitely a thing at some of the most progressive companies in the province, says Richard Yerema, managing editor of Canada's Top 100 Employers project, which organizes the Manitoba competition and is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

"In a modern office, it's a quiet room with comfortable chairs where you can make a (private) phone call. Some even have sleeping pods, a *Star Trek*-style chair that envelops you. It's not frowned upon. You're a human being. You might need five minutes to nap. During a busy day, you need those kinds of spaces to recharge," he said. Much of the change is driven by the growth in 'open-concept' office plans, which are great for encouraging communication between teams — but not so good for private conversations.

Nap rooms are just one of the perks available at some of Manitoba's Top Employers. Another popular way to receive a boost both mentally and physically is to visit the office gym. A growing number of workplaces have dedicated spaces equipped with some treadmills, stationary bikes and rowers, as well as some free weights and skipping ropes, as part of their wellness strategy.

Forward-thinking companies that simply don't have the space provide subsidies to their people so they can join a gym nearby the office or one close to their home.

Of course, all successful companies invest in their people. What's different from years ago is the widespread availability of online courses.

"The best organizations have wide-open tuition policies. It doesn't even have to be directly tied to your job. It could be a philosophy course. It's about employment improvement and making an investment in

the whole process," Yerema said.

There's also micro-training through online courses that employees can take in an evening and even do on their phones. Many of the best employers also reward employees for obtaining professional and trades certifications.

And speaking of technology, every advancement in connectivity enables companies to have employees on the clock from a variety of remote locations. It can be a double-edged sword, but technology is allowing people the flexibility to stay in contact during the workday while taking their kids to the dentist or an ailing parent to the doctor.

The impacts of technology on how we work over the past couple of decades is one of the big employment stories of our time. Flexible work options are very much here to stay because the technology driving this revolution is no more likely to go away from our working lives than it is from our personal lives. Of course, developing policies depends on the job. "Firefighters can't work from home but the best employers are not afraid to adapt to what a particular job allows," Yerema said.

Very good employers have always been active in the community, too, so if you treat your people well, community work is a natural extension. In fact, with most Manitobans living in urban centres, their concept of community is largely defined by their workplace.

"Employers have a greater role to play today than they would have had 100 years ago. They're the central organizing point for a lot of people in their lives," he said.

What's also interesting is that employers who take a broader view of their role in the community, it turns out, are almost always better places to work.

A growing number of companies are putting their money where their mouths are by giving their employees time off to volunteer, ranging from a day to an unlimited number of days annually.

They listen to what's important to staff by enabling employee committees to have a role in deciding where the company should direct its philanthropic efforts.

The winning organizations selected for this year's list keep a sharp lookout for the best people — their own employees are often the best marketers by virtue of the stories they tell their friends. So, it only makes sense to pay bonuses to staff who recruit others to join.

"You're using all of your people as the HR department and your staff is doing the first line of vetting. You have to be a decent place to work to offer that benefit. It's a symbiotic relationship. If you're an employer with very little to offer, referral bonuses aren't going to work because people would be reluctant to refer their friends," he said.



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ACCESS CREDIT UNION

SUCCEEDING AS AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Technology has changed the way people conduct their financial affairs, but providing quality service and building strong working relationships often requires a more personal approach.

An unwavering commitment to its membership and their communities continues to drive the success of Access Credit Union, a full-service financial institution based in southern Manitoba. Access's 255 employees serve members through 18 branches in 17 different communities across the region. Overall, the credit union addresses the financial needs of more than 54,000 members and manages over \$3.1 billion in assets.

Attracting, and retaining, quality staff in a competitive field is an ongoing priority, and Access's efforts have certainly resonated with employees, leading to the organization's inclusion on the list of Manitoba's Top Employers for the sixth consecutive year.

"We view our employees as brand ambassadors, so our employee referral program gives job applicants a good sense of what our organization is all about," says president and CEO, Larry Davey. "Our employee survey shows that employees recommend Access Credit Union as a good place to work."

Davey says Access offers competitive salaries and benefits, designed to "engage, motivate and support"

employees. Among the unique benefits offered to Access team members are flexible hours and locations, a bonus program, matched pension plans, company-paid group life insurance, preferred loan and deposit rates and generous vacation allotments.

Access Credit Union also positions itself as an organization where employees are encouraged and supported in building their careers. The organization provides paid education and training to help staff members grow their skills and knowledge to excel in the financial services industry, while also enhancing service to its members. Potential career paths at Access can be as diverse as information technology, marketing, human resource management or financial planning.

Davey says Access also actively promotes its organizational core values — integrity, community support, focus on members and employees, proactive approach — in addition to encouraging innovation and making a difference in the world, to attract like-minded job candidates.

"A key piece of our identity is living our core values," he says. "To do this, we need employees who believe in what we do as a credit union and as a community supporter. This mindset contributes to a workplace culture where employees feel empowered and supported."

Building relationships, not only with its members, but also inside and outside of the organization, has been a key to Access Credit Union's success, says Davey, reflecting a shared philosophy that extends into the communities they are proud to serve.

"The three pillars of our community strategy are community investment, volunteerism and financial literacy," says Davey. "Our certified financial literacy trainers have conducted 47 workshops this year, reaching a total of 683 participants. We have invested over \$625,000 into our communities thus far, and over the past couple of years, we have had over 90 per cent of our employees volunteer eight hours or more of their own time to support community events and initiatives."

Continually striving to be an employer of choice, Access Credit Union is evolving in tune with the financial industry and the needs of a modern workforce.

"We know there are a lot of choices for job seekers nowadays, so we are continually refining the Access employee experience to make us an attractive choice to the talent and skill that we know resides throughout Manitoba," says Davey. "The financial industry is always changing, and our focus is on keeping pace with that change. Our corporate commitment to personal development encourages employees to continue their post-secondary education. We continue to invest in technology that eliminates low-value work and allows employees to focus on the work they find meaningful, whether that is providing advice, building relationships or increasing our internal capacity to accomplish amazing things."

For more information on careers with Access Credit Union, go to accesscu.ca.



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ARTIC CO-OPERATIVES LIMITED

SENSE OF DUTY DRIVES ARCTIC CO-OP

BY TODD LEWYS

Take a close look at the definition of co-operative and you'll find that it's two-pronged.

As an adjective, a co-operative is defined as "involving mutual assistance in working toward a common goal."

Its second definition, as a noun, is even more specific: a farm, business or other organization which is owned and run jointly by its Members, who share the profits or benefits.

Those two definitions speak directly to what Arctic Co-operatives Limited is all about, says the company's marketing and

communications manager, Mike Leach.

"We're owned by Members and are part of a group of 32 Member Co-ops," he says. "That creates a serious sense of duty to the communities we serve. At Arctic Co-ops, we take that responsibility very seriously."

That responsibility entails running an efficient, profitable business that allows as much money as possible to flow back to Members of the Co-op.

For that to happen, it's imperative that

employees be as productive as possible. However, productivity doesn't just happen.

Rather, it's the by-product of the conscious efforts of a company to create a workplace in which employees can thrive, allowing them to be at their best on a daily basis.

"To act on behalf of our Members, it's incumbent upon our management team to make the Co-op a great place to work," explains Leach. "To do that, they must be explicit about stating their principles and

values. Our team doesn't just talk about them, they actively demonstrate them."

One of those values is employee engagement driven by a commitment to bringing people together, says Leach.

"We have a Staff Council Committee that generates ideas for events. If anyone has a good idea, management will help make the event happen. Events range from ping-pong tournaments to hockey pools to yoga."

The overall idea behind such events and activities is a simple one.

"The events are designed to bring employees together to share who they are with one another," he says. "A good example is our annual Christmas party. Every year, a different department plans it and holds fundraisers to pay for it. It's a year-long campaign that culminates in a great party that everyone enjoys."

Leach adds that Arctic Co-op's management team also actively promotes a collaborative workplace atmosphere.

"Our employees don't operate in the workplace environment; the environment is part of who they are. Management here cares about who employees are and what they value. When you work on something, your contribution to a project is very visible. People really appreciate a culture of inclusion and diversity."

The upshot is that a little consideration and appreciation goes a long way.

"It seems management has figured out how to strike the balance required to create a productive yet harmonious workplace," says Leach. "Even though there's lots of back and forth about different issues there's never any acrimony. Everyone's pulling in the same direction."

At the end of the day, it's not about perpetuating a rigid system, but about doing what's best for everyone involved.

"Our management team is focused on providing our staff with the tools that will develop their talent and skill sets, and create a practical, efficient company infrastructure. The more we put into our employees, the stronger they and the organization become. Nothing is ego-driven here."

That selfless, even-handed approach subsequently makes work a pleasure, not a chore.

"A real spirit of ownership and collaboration rules here," he says. "That makes for a refreshing and exciting place to come to work to every day."



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ASSINIBOINE CREDIT UNION

A PASSION FROM WITHIN

If one way to determine if a company is a truly outstanding employer is to check with their employees, then Assiniboine Credit Union must be doing a lot of things right. Employee feedback at the Manitoba credit union is, more-often-than-not, of the glowing kind.

"The positive response we get from our employees is a real source of pride for us," says Kim Champion Taylor, Chief People Officer.

"I truly am impressed with the depth of connection employees have with our vision and values, and how that translates into successful careers with ACU."

One such story is that of Vera Couto, who came to Winnipeg from her native Portugal. Her first job was to clean offices, including the ACU head office on Main Street.

"As I cleaned the ATM area of the Main Branch each morning, I would see the ACU team smiling and laughing with each other and with members. I knew that I could do more than clean floors and I was determined to be on that team," Couto says.

"Eighteen months later I applied for a position, and now I've been promoted to a Member Services Coordinator position at a new branch. In Portugal I worked for the same employer for nine years and never felt as welcome or part of a team as I do at ACU. They took a chance on me and believed in me, and I want to help others now in return more than ever."

Champion Taylor says stories like these make ACU a special place.

"Vera's story isn't unique in ACU but it certainly is special. Career opportunities like these aren't created without talented and values-aligned leaders and colleagues who have this exceptional ability to look

beyond traditional qualifications, and find the values and characteristics of an individual that will support their personal and professional success at ACU."

Sharmila Vijayann, a Learning Solutions Business Partner at ACU, saw the difference right from the start.

"The way my interview flowed and how my skills demo was conducted, I got a strong sense of purpose, commitment, inclusion and integrity from the whole panel," says Vijayann, who has been with ACU since 2016.

"I enjoy participating in diverse cross functional projects, each of which brings deep insights, interesting challenges and meaningful experiences, adding value to my time here. And I deeply appreciate the ACU vision, mission and values, our business ethics, commitment to the triple bottom line — people, planet and prosperity — and the importance ACU places in its employees," she adds.

Mani Sheppard-Luangkhot, a Financial Access Programs Manager, understands the importance of financial literacy. Her family arrived from Laos in 1985 and learning about banking and finances in Canada was challenging. After her post-secondary education, she was able to pursue her dream of helping others.

"My desire was to work with an organization that fosters diversity and inclusion, one that is just as committed as



I am about giving back to community," she says. "I was able to pursue my passion to work with financial literacy and to play a part in financial inclusion for the underserved. As someone once said, 'it's about building community, not selling community.'"

A big part of fostering the strong belief in what ACU does is the Being Assiniboine program. Every employee experiences this in-depth, three-day workshop that guides everyone through an exploration of how a financial institution can have real impact on a community, and how each employee owns a piece of that impact while working at ACU.

"These three days provide everyone with an opportunity to reconnect with the ACU vision and mission. The workshop provides everyone

the chance to examine how they themselves play an important role in creating that ideal community every day at work," says Champion Taylor.

The ACU mission is to provide financial

services for the betterment of members, employees and communities. Adds Champion Taylor, "Providing employees with the opportunity to bring their whole selves to work and engage in meaningful work, is one way we remain true to our mission, while helping them build a rewarding career."

The ACU Community Grants Committee on tour learning about the impact ACU grants make on organizations and the communities we live in. From left to right: Ron Desmarais, Lorie-Anne Bretecher (Chair), Brendan Reimer, Meron (Lilly) Terffa, Jill Hollosi and Marilyn Funk.

ACU PHOTO

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BIRCHWOOD

EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING

BY NEIL COLIGAN

For over 55 years Birchwood has been a familiar name associated with selling cars and trucks in Winnipeg.

In fact, you'd be hard pressed not to notice Birchwood in the city with its 23 dealerships and operations and 1,200 employees. This includes people working in auto-body shops as well as financing.

But as the company (a Manitoba Top Employer three years in a row) looks toward 2020, there's major growth on the horizon and some significant changes not readily seen as you drive up to their door.

"We've refreshed our vision, our mission and our values," says MaryAnn Kempe, Birchwood's chief human resources officer. "Now known simply as 'Birchwood,' our new slogan, 'Experience is everything,' captures the heart of Birchwood culture. We believe our value is the experience we offer — with our customers and with our team members."

In May 2020 Birchwood will open a new standalone Lexus dealership in the south end of Winnipeg. Currently, Lexus and Toyota share the same location at Pointe West Auto Park.

Looking further ahead, Birchwood will build a dealership for Volkswagen on Regent Street by December 2020. This represents a new brand in the company's portfolio of products.

Prestigious brand Jaguar Land Rover is also on the move with a new standalone dealership to open November 2020. Volvo will be a standalone dealership inside the Pointe West Autopark.

Kempe says while opening new dealerships does expand the company's brand awareness, it also means recruiting and training new employees, something Birchwood has continuously improved upon throughout its history.

"Every new employee at Birchwood starts their first day with onboarding. We spend the day sharing our values and connecting their work to our

customers — this is an opportunity to connect with our new team and hear from them," says Kempe.

The average age of the company's workforce is 35 with the largest group employed as sales consultants. Kempe says Birchwood employees are also very reflective of Winnipeg's diversity with more than 10 different ethnic communities and languages represented.

Sometimes this can make for challenges in communication.

"We did notice that some of our team members were really struggling with English, so we brought in ESL (English as a Second Language) training for all of our employees," she says.

That training was fully paid for by Birchwood with members of employees' families also eligible to learn.

Other training includes skills upgrades and consideration for an employee's future within the company.

"Every year we do sessions with employees to show them where they can grow, including conversations to seek input and work with them on career mapping," says Kempe.

Birchwood also works hard to attract more women to join its team. Currently, women make up only a quarter of its workforce. Kempe says some of the initiatives to attract women include talking to students at high schools and post-secondary campuses.

They also support scholarship programs in high schools and have a robust professional intern program that has been bringing in students for more than 20 years. Kempe says this effort is paying off with more women coming to them as co-op students.

Last year the company also launched a maternity and parental leave top-up for wages in order to encourage female employees to see the industry as an employer of choice.

All these changes and initiatives have presented company president Steve Chipman with a unique opportunity to thank employees.

Kempe says, "When Birchwood went through its rebranding Steve Chipman gave every employee



\$25 to invest in any charity of their choice." A lot of team members pooled the money together so their donations could go farther, she adds.

Kempe says it's a move that reflects the company's values. "I really believe people come to work at Birchwood because of our connection and commitment to our community — we really try to understand what matters to them," she says.

"We also have fun. Such as in December, when

we hold our annual Birchwood Bucks auction and our annual Christmas parties, one for the children of our team members and another for the adults," says Kempe.

Birchwood Bucks is an evening where employees who work with customers get to use company credits they've earned throughout a period of time to bid on gifts at a gala auction where managers do the serving.

Birchwood

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CANADA LIFE

UNITED TO
BETTER SERVE
CUSTOMERS

BY JIM BENDER

In April 2019, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life came together to build a stronger brand and better serve customers.

“We have a long history and deep roots in Winnipeg as Great-West Life, and we believe the power of caring has made us who we are today,” says Jeff Macoun, President and Chief Operating Officer, Canada, Canada Life. “We invest in people who are going to help grow the new Canada Life as a valuable service to our customers, a trusted brand to Canadians and as a respected part of our community.”

This singular focus may be why the company was named one of Manitoba’s Top Employers for the third year running. From supporting the next generation of professionals through internships and training opportunities, providing employees with valuable financial, physical and mental wellness benefits, and creating space for its people to make a positive impact on diversity and inclusion in the organization through employee resource groups, Canada Life is fostering a culture of growth, community and success.

Its relatively new Diversity Leadership Council (DLC) comprises a diverse group of senior leaders across its various lines of business and corporate functions who work to embed diversity and inclusion efforts in all of the company’s business and organizational priorities.

The DLC currently focuses on five key areas: Women in Leadership, Indigenous Peoples,



Young Professionals, LGBTQ2+ and Persons with Disabilities. Each year the areas of focus will be reviewed and additional groups may be added based on employee interest and business need.

Innovation and technology are also front of mind. “We’ve been challenging ourselves to be more agile,” Macoun says. “Whether we’re hiring talent for our new digital labs, seeking specialists in the financial sector or filling the myriad of positions in our many departments, a customer-service, innovation, growth and collaboration mindset is key.”

“As part of this approach, we launched digital labs — employee working groups from different business areas to tackle special, time-sensitive projects. With digital labs, we can test solutions with advisors and customers and incorporate feedback as we go. It’s an innovative way to embrace collaboration, remove hierarchy and deliver solutions faster.”

With the advent of digital technology, the range of career options at Canada Life continues to grow — everything from information technology, financial management, accounting, actuarial sciences, sales and marketing, law and human resources, to corporate communications, media relations, public affairs, social media and other creative types, to cafeteria workers, janitorial services, landscapers, nursing and other professions. Employees have the chance to grow their careers through training and development programs that also bolster workplace retention.

For those just starting out, Canada Life works with post-secondary schools in the province to provide internships for new graduates. It also believes that ongoing education is an opportunity for people to look beyond their current position. Each one of their employees has access to \$2,000 per year

Canada Life employees participate in #MyCanadaLife campaign.

towards ongoing education outside of the organization. To supplement that, there were 16,000 hours of in-house sessions offered to employees the past year.

Canada Life offers a comprehensive, flexible benefits plan for its employees that provides optional levels of coverage. The Winnipeg campus includes an on-site fitness facility available to employees 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for a nominal fee and every full time employee has a \$400 wellness account. Employees also participate in both sports and arts programming and are encouraged to volunteer at various charitable events. Last year its employees raised about \$2.2 million for charity.



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NURTURING EMPLOYEE IDEAS LEADS TO ENGAGING WORKPLACE CULTURE

BY SHEL ZOLKEWICH

"Corporate culture" refers to the shared values, attitudes, standards and beliefs that characterize an organization and define its nature. And when it comes to the Canadian Canola Growers Association (CCGA), that culture is rooted in a decidedly bottom-up approach, where employees are the catalyst for many of the programs that contribute to a healthy workplace.

"It has a huge impact when it's the employees who are bringing ideas forward and making the decisions," said Larysa Motruk, human resources director for the organization.

The cornerstone of the culture lies in the Engagement Committee, an employee-led effort that encourages improvements and additions to workplace conditions. It's likely part of the reason the organization — with fewer than 65 employees — sees very little turnover.

As CCGA celebrates its 35th anniversary, the organization reflects on the diversity of its workplace, with people from varying backgrounds and diverse skills and experiences. Many of those employees have been at CCGA for upwards of 10 years, and some even celebrating more than 20 years at CCGA.

Many of the employees at CCGA didn't imagine a career in agriculture, but this sector has provided exciting career opportunities for staff working in areas such as IT, economics, communications, accounting, customer service and more. As the national voice for

Canada's 43,000 canola farmers, every day the CCGA team embraces the organization's vision of Helping Farmers Succeed. Whether providing financing services through the administration of the Advance Payments Program; undertaking important agriculture policy development research in areas such as trade, business risk management, or rail transportation; or advocating on national and international issues that impact farm profitability with policy makers in Canada or internationally, the team at CCGA keeps that vision at the heart of work every day.

One of the newest programs to come out of the Engagement Committee is a top-up program for maternity and paternity leave. The top-up provides 90 per cent of salary for up to 15 weeks for maternity leave and 12 weeks for parental leave and adoptive parent leave, bridging the gap left by regular employment insurance benefits.

Since its launch this spring, four employees have already taken advantage of the top-up.

"People who were expecting said this was better than a Christmas present!" Motruk said. "We even back-dated the program so someone who was already on maternity leave could take advantage of it."

In addition to the financial lift, the program also includes a phased return to work component. It allows returning employees a gradual return, from 50 per cent time up to 100 per cent time over the course of two months. "It's important for employees to fully adjust to being back in the workplace," Motruk said. "This allows

them time to slowly get children into daycare and get into a new schedule."

The CCGA also encourages employee development by offering a robust tuition subsidy program. Launched in 2016, it covers job-related courses for professional accreditation, mentoring and in-house and online training options.

"This allows employees to go back to school and to further enhance their knowledge and skills, relevant to their particular area of work. We have employees who have completed an MBA and payroll courses, studying for an accounting diploma and we cover up to 100 per cent of the tuition," Motruk said. "We also provide paid days off for exams."

As part of the company's benefits plan, employees receive a health spending account of \$400 annually that covers medical, dental and vision needs. But there's also a separate physical wellness spending account of \$500 that lets employees get creative when it comes to their well-being.

"We launched this in 2018 and it's been hugely popular," Motruk said. "We have people who buy fitness club memberships, tennis lessons, ski passes and home fitness equipment. We've also had people buy skates so they can enjoy some winter activities."

And to provide stimulation at midday, regular Lunch and Learn sessions cover a wide range of topics including nutrition, yoga, estate planning and art therapy.

"All these programs and ideas are brought forward by employees," Motruk said. "We are honest and open about what can work and what can't work. But there's truly something empowering about involving everyone in the process. That's the key to our positive corporate culture around here."



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CANAD INNS

Front row, from left: Dan Lussier, CEO, Joe Sacco, VP Operations, and Lea Ledohowski, President. Back row, right: Lane Ledohowski, Executive VP. Middle row: Tracy Gehring, General Manager of Canad Inns Destination Centre Transcona, and her Management Team. CANAD INNS PHOTO

COMMUNITY
COMMITMENT
AT CANAD INNS

BY TODD LEWYS

Over the last four decades, Canad Inns has established itself as Manitoba’s largest hospitality provider and one of Manitoba’s Top Employers.

Their ascension to the top has been inspiring.

After all, it isn’t often that a local company gets the better of hotel chains that possess international reputations and myriad resources.

Lea Ledohowski, President of Canad Inns says the company’s success — both as a hospitality provider and workplace — can be attributed to a simple philosophy.

“We operate as part of the community and take that commitment to our customers and

employees very seriously,” she says. “Our mission is to provide our guests with the best value and service in the industry. You can’t do that without a happy, productive workforce. We’re nothing without our people.”

While Canad Inns has grown significantly over the years, it hasn’t grown so large that its management team has lost touch with its employees.

“Organizations can get too big,” says Ledohowski. “We made the decision to stay smaller and local early on. Doing that has allowed us to maintain a horizontal management structure where there are never too many layers between our executives and our front line employees.”

That philosophy has allowed Canad Inns to stay true to its roots of being a Manitoba-grown business that seeks out local talent.

Which is to say that if a job applicant shows a willingness to work hard and learn, they’ll be given the chance to grow within the organization.

“Several of our vice-presidents actually started out in entry level positions. If someone’s ambitious, we’ll mentor them in the direction they want to go,” she says. “We seek out homegrown people, train them, and

then work with them to define their role in a way that fit their talents and interests. That benefits them and us.”

At the same time, Canad Inns’ management team strives to create a work environment that stresses building personal relationships and instills a sense of belonging.

“We do a lot of team building — that helps people to get to know each other better, which develops a higher level of teamwork from management on down. The more we enjoy working together, the better we’ll serve our customers.”

Ledohowski adds that management also works hard at listening to what employees have to say, as some of the best ideas come from the people who work at front line.

“We do our best to listen and implement their ideas. It’s important that management be accessible to maintain communication with all levels of the organization. It’s the only way to create a cohesive, successful company.”

Employees at Canad Inns also benefit from education support programs that provide scholarships and opportunities for skill development and pursuing a higher education.

In short, Canad Inns is people focused.

“Our management team has a deep sense of having our business give back to the community — the people we serve, and the people we employ. It’s a simple concept, but the synergy is important.”

It’s a concept that’s worked for four decades — and counting.

“A lot of employees stay with us for decades,” notes Ledohowski. “I think that’s because we provide an environment that helps them enjoy what they’re doing. That involves making them feel appreciated, placing them in a position that’s specific to their talents and providing them with the support they need to grow.”

That notion of providing support runs deep at Canad Inns.

“As an organization, we support local and community-oriented charitable programs through the Canad Inns Foundation,” says Ledohowski. “We appreciate people choosing us. That makes us want to give back to the community we serve — both the public, and our employees. We don’t do everything perfectly, but we’re always evolving to become the best employer and community citizen we can be.”

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A culture of connection and sharing drives CWB National Leasing.

CWB National Leasing is a Winnipeg-based equipment leasing company that helps more than 70,000 Canadian businesses secure the tools they need to grow. Canada's largest and longest-standing equipment financing company, CWB National Leasing has been providing financial services to businesses in Canada and the U.S. for over 40 years.

Grant Shaw, the company's Senior Vice-President of Strategy, says you get a sense of the open culture the minute you walk through the door.

"It can be something as simple as walking down the hallway and seeing people saying hello to each other," Shaw says.

"We're very inclusive in the sense that everyone's opinion matters; everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the organization. Beyond that, we focus on finding out what people's expectations are when they come to work here."

The company aims to get the conversation rolling through transparent communication from the top down.

"There's no information that's unknown in this organization," he says. "We are completely transparent, share a lot of information and keep people informed of what's going on in the organization."

The company gets employees directly involved through its bi-monthly "Pardon the Interruption" meetings, where the company brings in lunch and introduces new team members, celebrates anniversaries and provides insights into the business by discussing financial information and where challenges and opportunities lie.

Although CWB National Leasing has over 400 employees across Canada (with more than 300 in Manitoba), the company makes sure to loop them into the conversation.

"We ensure that out-of-town employees have an opportunity to participate in meetings via a webcam," Shaw says.

Employee wellness is also front and centre

Staff members enjoy free access to an on-site fitness facility and are encouraged to reduce the stress of a busy day in the company's Zen Zone relaxation and mediation space. The company also offers a certified trainer who can provide professional-level health coaching via web and email.

Employees with green thumbs can relax while working in one of the company's three

community garden areas. Staff can also contemplate the more than 230 original artworks on display in the office and may even get some first-hand inspiration from a visiting artist creating a new work.

The sense of wellness also extends into the community, as employees are provided paid time to participate in charitable activities and volunteering. The company also brings in speakers from charitable organizations to highlight ongoing initiatives staff can support.

CWB National Leasing offers an attractive benefit package

Employees start with three weeks of vacation and are also offered time off through flexible work arrangements and up to six paid personal days off per year. Staff members are encouraged to save for the longer term with matching RSP contributions from the company. There's also a share purchase plan through which employees can contribute up to 10 per cent of their salary and enjoy a five per cent contribution from the company. Every employee gets an automatic two per cent contribution from the company.

CWB National Leasing also takes pride in knowing happy staff members can be the company's best recruiters, offering bonuses of up to \$2,000 for new employee referrals.

Shaw has worked at the company for over two decades and says it's been an experience like no other.

"I've never worked for a place like this before and I can honestly say that's been the case since Day 1," he says. "The previous leadership that was here instilled such an inviting, open culture that we still have today. I can truly say it's the best place to work."

CWB National Leasing employees celebrate after a team-building activity.

PHOTO BY BRADLEY GERBRANDT



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The official amalgamation of Catalyst and Vanguard Credit Unions ushered in a new era in financial services in Parkland and southwestern Manitoba communities.

The result was Fusion Credit Union, a full-service financial institution, with 175 employees serving nearly 30,000 members through 18 branches across the region. With assets under administration of more than \$1.06 billion, Fusion has the capacity, the shared commitment and the opportunity to support growth and prosperity in its branch communities and beyond.

"We have an outstanding, talented group of employees," says Ron Hedley, Chief Executive Officer for Fusion. "We've really gelled and come together as a team, and I think that's reflected in the way we care for our members."

Hedley says Fusion staff take their work seriously, but not themselves, as they strive to foster fun, team-oriented, collaborative workplaces. That company enthusiasm is clearly catching on as Fusion Credit Union made its way onto the 2019 list of Manitoba's Top Employers.

"Fusion has already earned a reputation as a Top Employer. Yes, the benefits we offer are excellent, but we also cultivate a work environment that aligns extremely well with the values we share with our members and communities, and the many groups and projects we support," says Hedley.

Fusion employees receive competitive

salaries and company benefits, including training allowances, education funding and other professional development opportunities. The credit union considers itself an "idea place" and encourages staff to develop creative ideas about how the organization can strengthen its commitment to innovation and service excellence.

"We're constantly doing innovative things and people across the organization are always encouraged to participate," says Hedley. "We value everyone's feedback and input, and listen to every voice. Great ideas have come from every level of the organization."

Owned by its members, governed by a board of directors, and staffed by area residents, Fusion continues to be one of the most active supporters of community organizations and events in the region. The credit union is a major sponsor of Credit Union Place and Countryfest in Dauphin, as well as the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair in Brandon.

Very proud of its community roots, Fusion took its community service ethic further still in introducing its Full Circle Fund. This special fund provides support to worthy, particularly ambitious, projects that enhance the quality of life for people of all ages in the communities served by Fusion. Recent community projects funded include the Gilbert Plains Community Hall, Whitmore School Playground in Dauphin, Foxwarren Arena, Binscarth Museum and the Oak Lake Community Hall.

"We launched the Full Circle Fund in 2019 as our way to support projects and groups that reflect the priorities and values that matter most in our communities," he says, adding that many staff members are also active volunteers. "This fund has supported everything from youth sports to legacy projects and everything in between."

Fusion has given back in other significant ways, notably by returning profits to its

members through patronage payments. In 2018, Fusion members were on the receiving end of more than \$1 million dollars. Indeed, the credit union has paid patronage returns to its members every year for the past 19 years.

Hedley says Fusion continues to succeed by staying true to its vision, mission and values and by ensuring that the best interests of its members are always an organizational priority. The organization recognizes the value of outstanding member service delivered by a team of staff members who share Fusion's values and take pride in their work and their communities.

"Our members deserve the very best, and so do we, as co-workers and team players," says Hedley. "Great people drive great results."

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JOHNSTON GROUP INC.

FOCUSED ON WELLNESS & TEAM SPIRIT

BY SHEL ZOLKEWICH

Lunch hour fitness classes, year-end bonuses and paid sabbaticals are just the beginning of what's offered under the umbrella of the JG Wellness Program at Johnston Group Inc., a group insurance benefits company with 275 employees based in Winnipeg.

"It's important to our business," said president Dave Angus. "Employee wellness and health is how we measure ourselves. So it certainly makes sense that we lead the way."

The company created the wellness program with four pillars in mind — physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. It's an employee-run program with each pillar represented by a committee that puts on activities and manages yearly initiatives.

"We were really enthused by the reaction of the staff to get involved in the committees around the wellness focus," Angus said. "It underlines how important it is for companies to have a focus on wellness in today's workplace."

The office boasts a fully equipped fitness centre with treadmills, rowing machines, stationary bikes, free weights and a robust schedule of regular fitness classes. The facility sees lots of activity before and after work, but it's busiest during lunchtime when employees

lead group exercises. "It's definitely a popular part of the wellness program," Angus said. "The classes are a hit and they send the signal that we think it's important for employees to look after themselves."

In addition to the wellness program, Johnston Group also offers the rare commodity of financial incentives to its employees for referrals of new staff members. Angus explained that every employee likely has people within his or her circle that would be a good fit and could contribute to the team.

"It's actually been more successful than we thought," he said of the referral program. "We're proud of our new facility and it's easy for employees to bring their friends here. It's just another way to help us ensure we bring the right people into the family."

Johnston Group also offers year-end bonuses as a way to share success with the people who make it happen.

"It's simply part of our approach — that we're a team. We make it happen together and share in the success together," Angus said. "It's based on fiscal year-end performance and everyone gets the same bonus. It really sends a strong message to employees."

Johnston Group also offers a variety of other financial incentives including complimentary Costco memberships and discounts on a range of goods and services through the Workperks discount program.

Vacation time at Johnston Group begins with three weeks and increases by a day each year. Angus said time away from work is a critical component to overall wellness.

"A group of overworked employees quickly impacts productivity, so some time to refresh and recharge is good for everyone. Employees truly deserve time off to be with their friends and families and take care of themselves," he said.

In addition to generous vacation days, employees may also opt for a paid sabbatical of four weeks at their 10th anniversary with the company. A sabbatical is also offered at



the 15th year mark (six weeks) and the 20th year mark (eight weeks).

"It's a chance to take a step back and take care of themselves and really do those things they've been dreaming about," Angus said. "It's the opportunity to do those things they've never had time to do before. Refresh the spirit."

Angus added that all the programs combined illustrate the positive corporate

culture that's been nurtured at Johnston Group.

"If you want to be an employer of choice, the work experience is really important these days," Angus said. "There have been so many positive changes in the workplace and there will be more as the next generation strives for work-life balance." new we could do what we do better by staying true to who we are and staying local."

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MAGELLAN AEROSPACE, WINNIPEG

MORALE IS SKY-HIGH AT MAGELLAN

BY SHERRY KANIUGA

Excellent benefits, training opportunities and wellness programs all help make Magellan Aerospace a great place to work. But it's the sense of camaraderie and familiarity that make employees feel they're at home.

"A lot of people here have worked alongside the same people for years, and they really do feel like a family," says Julie Robichaud, Executive Assistant for Magellan's Winnipeg division.

A global manufacturer of aerostructure assemblies and aeroengine components, that serves the commercial aerospace and defence sectors, Magellan has been in business in Manitoba for nearly 90 years. Its Manitoba operations manufacture complex components and assemblies, space products and services, and specialty products.

The 565 staff in Manitoba mostly work in the company's large complex in Winnipeg, with about 50 employees at a smaller plant in Rockwood. The family dynamic exists at both locations, and transcends status.

"We have both a unionized and a salaried environment, but we all work together," explains Stephen Hay, Resource and Training Manager. "Our general manager walks the floor all the time and connects with people. Honest, open communication is key for everybody."

Constant learning and improving is also key. Magellan boasts several internal training

programs to prepare new hires for work, as well as development, leadership, skills and technical training programs to "upskill" their staff, Hay says.

Ongoing employee development and professional accreditation is encouraged — Magellan funds up to 100 per cent of tuition for job-related programs.

Partnerships with schools are also important. The company works closely with Red River College, the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg School Division, whose Technical Vocational High School runs an Aerospace Maintenance and Manufacturing Orientation Program that graduates about 30 students annually — many being hired by Magellan.

"We get a semi-skilled, motivated worker, and we take them up to the next level," Hay says.

The workforce has been changing over the years, and Magellan has welcomed an influx of new Canadians through these industry programs and beyond.

"We have a really diverse population here, and we love it," says Robichaud. "We are also very diverse age-wise: our average age is about

50, and every year we have people celebrating 30-, 35-, even 50-year anniversaries. That says a lot about the company."

The number of women working in the industry has also increased. Female hires into the trades have exceeded the norm over the last three years, Hay stated.

While their work is intense, employees still find a way to have fun, while supporting the community. Staff pay into an optional Social and Welfare Association, and the company matches the amount contributed. This funds holiday parties for staff and families, subsidized family outings to hockey or football games, a summer picnic and more. Employees also support local charities with payroll deduction contributions and donation drives for local organizations such as Siloam Mission and the Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC), and rack up about 2,000 volunteer hours each year with initiatives like United Way's Day of Caring or on Habitat for Humanity home builds. Magellan's Social and Welfare Association also invests in the education of the next generation, awarding \$250 scholarships each year to four children

of employees.

Because investing in employee health is a win-win, staff can choose to join Magellan's well-equipped onsite wellness centre for just \$5 per month, and can also get discounted memberships for all of their family members at Shapes Fitness.

The excellent benefits and pension program, competitive wages, economical parking and the fitness facility, plus all of the extra perks, contribute to the longevity of careers at Magellan, Robichaud says. But it always comes back to the people.

"It's so great to work for a company that really commits to the community, focuses on a healthy workforce and being diverse, and has solid roots in Winnipeg. It helps you get up in the morning and want to go to work every day."

Families enjoy the day at Magellan's annual Tinkertown Family Picnic.

MAGELLAN AEROSPACE PHOTO



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Manitoba Blue Cross employees come together for their Stronger Together event in support of CancerCare Manitoba.

CULTURE OF CARING

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

Manitoba Blue Cross is marking a milestone achievement by being recognized as a Top Employer for the 10th time.

The not-for-profit organization provides health, dental, travel, life, disability and employee assistance coverage to more than half a million Manitobans. For 45 years, Manitoba Blue Cross has been the province's leading provider of cost-effective

individual and group benefits. With a focus on flexibility, it continues to adapt products and services to meet Manitobans' changing health-care needs.

"Our coverage is designed for Manitobans," said Brenda Slikker, interim president and chief executive officer.

"We have a deep understanding of the health-care landscape in the province and the needs of Manitobans."

The organization also makes it a priority to care for its employees, which is evident in its ongoing acknowledgment as a Top Employer.

"This is an important recognition for us. Employee engagement and satisfaction are what we strive for as a company. Manitobans spend a great deal of time at work, so we believe in providing a culture that fosters wellness, growth and work-life balance," Slikker said.

"Health and wellness are woven into our corporate culture. We provide employees with flexible work-life balance initiatives that support physical, emotional, family and community health and enhance employee satisfaction. Our comprehensive benefits package is responsive to the needs of our

ever-changing employee population."

The compensation package includes a competitive salary, comprehensive benefits and a pension plan. In addition, employees enjoy free access to an onsite fitness facility as well as a staff lounge that includes a full kitchen, foosball and pool tables, television and various games for recreation. Healthy snacks and meals are available for purchase from their Blue Café.

Employees can also look forward to staff barbecues, Family Fun Days and other special events such as the annual holiday gala and children's holiday party.

With more than 300 employees, Manitoba Blue Cross believes in an environment that fosters flexibility and wellness alongside opportunities for growth and development.

"It's the balance that we strike to ensure our employees are rewarded for their accomplishments, supported in their lives and motivated in the day-to-day," Slikker said.

"All of our efforts and initiatives are in support of the physical, psychological, spiritual and financial health of our employees. We are a caring company that is committed to our core values of

quality, customer service, integrity, respect, teamwork and community spirit."

The company ensures its employees have the ability to learn and develop, be innovative, and be challenged to serve clients better while pursuing personal career aspirations.

"Employees are key to our success, and their development and growth is essential to us. As a testament to this, we offer a program called CARE (Creating A Rewarding Environment), which is a platform designed to foster learning and development," Slikker said.

"CARE encourages our employees to be fully engaged as partners in their own professional growth."

Community initiatives remain another key component to the positive workplace culture at Manitoba Blue Cross. Some of this year's events included a United Way campaign, Grow-a-Row for Winnipeg Harvest, Children's Hospital Foundation fundraisers and Stronger Together, an event aimed at bringing employees together in the fight against cancer. Christmas Cheer Board collections will be starting soon.

In addition, the company conducts surveys each year to measure employee satisfaction, with a more extensive survey conducted every three years. Recent statistics indicate that 96 per cent of employees are proud to work at Manitoba Blue Cross and 95 per cent enjoy working there.

"We genuinely care about our employees," Slikker said, "and consider Manitoba Blue Cross a family."

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MANITOBA HYDRO

DEDICATED
WORKFORCE
POWERS UTILITY

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

If Manitoba Hydro employees were not dedicated, there would probably still be people in the province today without power.

Thanks to Manitoba Hydro employees, the more than 160,000 customers who experienced power outages during the Thanksgiving weekend snow storm had their electricity restored as quickly as humanly possible.

The speed with which they could once again heat their homes and cool their perishables was far from a straightforward process. Approximately 950 kilometres of hydro lines and about 4,000 wood poles were damaged, some areas worse than others.

"It took a couple of hours to a couple of weeks depending on the damage to the area you were in," said Scott Powell, director of corporate communications at Manitoba Hydro. "On Kingston Row (in Winnipeg), our crews basically had to turn into lumberjacks before they restored the power because they had to remove so many trees and branches."

It's this sort of employee dedication that contributed to Manitoba Hydro being named one of the province's Top Employers for the 10th year in a row.

Sharon Harrald, vice-president of human resources and corporate services at the provincial utility, isn't surprised.

Whether they were climbing poles, answering phones in the call centre or dealing with the non-stop questions from the media, Manitoba Hydro employees approached the tasks at hand with professionalism, energy and gus-

to. Considering they had never faced a storm of such magnitude and didn't know the extent of what lay ahead until they were in the thick of it, Harrald said the response showed the employees' commitment to both their jobs and their fellow Manitobans.

"It was the worst storm we've ever dealt with," she said. "How they came together was phenomenal. We went from, 'there's a storm' to 'we have things to fix' to 'there's a state of emergency, we need to mobilize.'"

"People feel like they're part of something bigger than just Manitoba Hydro," Harrald added. "(Providing) reliable services to the province of Manitoba is different than just doing a job."

Many employees have been with the utility for a significant portion of their careers and have a great deal of pride in the work they do, Harrald said. They spend the vast majority of their work days operating under the public radar, but when they were suddenly front and centre for days on end, they stepped up in a big way.

"I had text messages from the spouses, partners and family members of employees working in Lundar and Portage la Prairie saying, 'Thanks for taking care of my spouse, partner, or child.' It extends beyond the people in the field — it's their families," she said.

From their employment packages and compensation to involvement with the community to charity work, Manitoba Hydro's employees feel that their company cares about them, she said.

"There are over 30 registered charities they can donate to through payroll deduction. They're encouraged to be involved in the community and they're recognized for doing so," she said.

Hydro is also proud to have

a workforce that reflects the communities it serves. For example, 20 per cent of its staff are Indigenous, but that number rises to over 50 per cent in northern Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro has also developed special training programs to increase the representation of Indigenous people in its workforce. For example, they have two Indigenous pre-placement programs to provide Indigenous candidates with academic upgrading and on-the-job training to meet the requirements of either the line trades or power electrician training programs.

One of the ways in which Hydro gets its message out about it being a good corporate citizen, as well telling compelling stories about its employees, is through its social media accounts.

"We spend a lot of time talking to our employees and we do a lot of video work and profiles," Powell said. "That could be people who work for us up north, a meter reader or somebody in the dispatch office."

"We want to communicate that this isn't a giant faceless company. It's made up of Manitobans, your friends and neighbours. Everybody knows somebody who works at Hydro."

Two Manitoba Hydro teams raised over \$10,000 in the recent CancerCare Manitoba Foundation Ride Inside, a stationary bike fundraising event in support of young people living with and beyond cancer. Winnipeg Jets captain Blake Wheeler and his family were special guests and key fundraisers.



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That's why the organization and its staff of 1,900 across the province are committed to

fostering a culture of excellence to best serve its customers.

"Exceptional coverage and service, affordable rates and safer roads are at the heart of everything we do, for all Manitobans," explains Satvir Jatana, MPI's Vice-President, Human Resources and Corporate Services and Chief Human Resources Officer.

"Financial prudence is a critical element in providing affordable rates. However, delivering on that promise doesn't come without obstacles. One of the issues we face is the rising cost of vehicle repair. As vehicles become more advanced technologically, completing safe and proper repairs becomes more expensive, which has a direct impact on rates. We have to innovate and challenge the way we do things to ensure we fulfil our mission — for both employees and customers."

With that in mind, the non-profit Crown corporation is undergoing a transformation. With its new President and CEO Ben Graham taking the helm in February 2018, the focus has shifted to an unwavering commitment to customer experience and transparency in its dealing with all stakeholders.

That journey demands the intentional and continuous development of leadership throughout the company.

One of the central ways this feat is being accomplished is through MPI Lead, its in-house leadership development program. Launched earlier this year, the dynamic suite offers new and established leaders the opportunity to develop both their business and people leadership skills.

Driving business results and cultivating up-and-coming talent, MPI Lead delivers measurable objectives through classroom and e-learning sessions as well as on-the-job projects and monthly discussion groups.

Managing Diverse Teams, Difficult Conversations and Managing Change are just a few examples of the wide range of leadership development courses being offered. The program is designed to give leaders the tools they need to not only succeed professionally but also run more effective and dynamic departments.

And the Lean 101 course is a perfect example of that balance.

Lean training teaches operational strategies that engage staff to continuously im-

prove safety, morale, quality, cost and productivity. As MPI is aiming to provide the best value possible to Manitobans, all staff are being encouraged to participate — from front-line to senior management.

The one-day session focuses on eliminating waste — which is any activity that doesn't add value to the products or services offered to customers.

Participants are able to identify challenges and ways to improve the customer's experience by breaking down key interactions. For example, they may analyze filing a claim after a collision looking at every stage from the Contact Centre employee taking the call to seeing that vehicle repaired and back on the road.

"We're focusing on customer-centric products and services delivered through efficient and agile platforms. And that requires skilled and engaged employees — they drive all that we do," Jatana said.

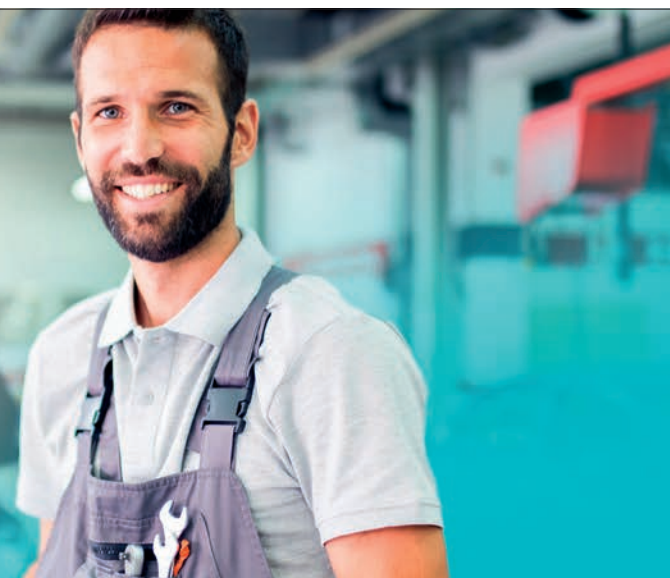
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NFI GROUP INC.

PEOPLE DRIVE NFI GROUP'S SUCCESS

BY JIM TIMLICK

NFI Group Inc. (NFI) has undergone numerous changes since founding in Winnipeg nearly 90 years ago.

From its humble beginnings as Western Auto and Truck Body Ltd. in 1930, NFI has grown to become one of the leading independent bus manufacturers in the world, offering innovative mobility solutions through buses and coaches, technology, and infrastructure — with a specific focus on zero-emission vehicles. It now operates 50 facilities in 10 different countries and its list of companies includes New Flyer, Motor Coach Industries, ARBOC, Alexander Dennis Ltd., NFI Parts, Carfair Composites and KMG. It has also developed leading-edge technology including the first LED headlights used in the industry and the first battery-electric transit bus.

NFI currently employs about 9,000 people globally, including 3,000 at its Manitoba operations. Those totals have nearly doubled over the past few years thanks to a combina-

tion of growing international business and a series of acquisitions to grow and diversify the company.

Janice Harper, NFI's executive vice-president of human resources, says people have played a major role in the evolution of the business, and the company has identified investing in staff as one of its top priorities. So, it's hardly surprising NFI has been named one of Manitoba's Top Employers for 2020. It marks the 10th time since the competition was established in 2007 that NFI has been named to the list.

"We're so proud to say our 2020 award builds on a foundation of past honours as one of Manitoba's Top Employers. Locally, this is an important recognition and validation, especially with NFI headquarters located here in Winnipeg and driven by an international team of incredible people," Harper says of the honour.

"I think it's recognition of the decades of steady growth, and the ongoing effort, commitment, and strategic focus that we've undertaken to make NFI a great place to work and build a career. If you walk through our doors, you'll see right away that we take our work environment and commitment to people very seriously."

NFI has done more than just pay lip service to the idea of investing in its employees. It provides a variety of in-house training initiatives, including the NFI Learning Institute, and has delivered more than 115,000 hours of training to employees of its New Flyer division in 2019 alone. NFI also offers current employees tuition subsidies for courses at

external institutions and connects with future employees by providing summer employment opportunities, apprenticeships and paid internships.

"Without constant investment in our people we can't expect to learn, grow and innovate alongside this changing industry," Harper says. "All of those things really require you to be continuously learning and developing. We really need to continue to help our people upskill."

While NFI employees have worked hard to make the company successful, they do have occasion to play. An employee social committee organizes numerous fun events throughout the year including summer barbecues, golf tournaments, children's holiday parties, retirement celebrations, and a family fishing derby. Employees are also encouraged to participate in a number of charitable and community efforts including NFI's annual United Way fundraising campaign, which this year raised more than \$470,000 and supported 22 United Way agencies across the U.S. and Canada.

"It's important for us to take time to celebrate, recognize, and promote individual and team accomplishments, as well as the extensive diversity across our international team," Harper explains. "It's also a great way to develop a sense of collaboration and team spirit within our culture. We work hard to build a diverse and inclusive workplace, and believe this is one of the big reasons we've been successful over the long-term: everybody lends a unique perspective, which in turn builds stronger dialogue across our team."

Perhaps that's why so many NFI employees stay with the company for as long as they do. Of the 9,000 people currently employed at its various locations, almost 1,200 of them have been with the organization for more than 20 years, including a large number of Manitobans.

And that employee/employer relation doesn't necessarily end even when someone's career comes to a close. NFI helps employees save for retirement through the pension plan option that best suits their needs. In some cases, employees may also have the option to take advantage of phased-in retirement work options that allow them to work part-time as they near retirement.

"It's also a good way to engage their years of wisdom through some of those transitions and transfer their knowledge to the next generation," Harper says.

As gratifying as it has been to be ranked among the province's Top Employers, Harper says NFI has no intention of resting on its laurels when it comes to providing the training and resources employees require.

"We're focused on ensuring that when we're doing things, we've got the right tools and are setting the right tone for our people, rather than just thinking we have all the answers," Harper explains. "We've got a lot of work to do — we're proud of our history, but excited for our future — and we're going to work hard together to enable the future of mobility."

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PALLISER FURNITURE UPHOLSTERY LTD.

PALLISER WORKS FOR THE GREATER GOOD

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

Palliser Furniture might be the only manufacturer in Manitoba — or possibly even in Canada — to have a growing relationship with the United Nations.

No, the Winnipeg-based furniture maker doesn't provide comfortable chairs and sofas for the break rooms of the intergovernmental organization responsible for maintaining peace and security and fostering co-operation around the globe. Instead, it has partnered with one of its divisions — the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) — to create a refugee employment program to help people arriving in Mexico from South America in search of a better life.

"Palliser is leading an innovative project for the region, and setting up a training program targeting employability skills for the refugee population. The refugee process takes time, so as employers of the region it's an opportunity to develop skills that can benefit industry in the area, while helping these families get established," said Wendy Ferris, Palliser's Chief Culture and People Officer.

Palliser has a trio of plants in Mexico, in Matamoros, Saltillo and Las Colinas, and employs about 1,800 people there. It also has 700 employees in Canada.

The driver of the company's humanitarian work is longtime CEO Art DeFehr, who stepped down a few years ago, but whose

history of humanitarian work is as long as his business record.

"We've had some partnerships with hiring refugees directly into the workforce (in Mexico), but the refugee population is rapidly growing at the southern Mexico border, and we need to think of new ways to match industry needs with the workforce," Ferris said.

So, Palliser put together a contingent, including Ferris and DeFehr, that travelled to the town of Tapachula to see the situation up close. (DeFehr is no stranger to the UN. He took on one of its senior positions in Somalia in the 1980s when warlords first took over the famine-ravaged country.)

The desire to promote the greater good is a big part of Palliser's corporate DNA at its headquarters in North Kildonan. In fact, its workforce bears a striking resemblance to the UN itself.

"We have a very inclusive workforce and we support newcomers to Canada. These are people who want to start a new life. They've overcome a lot of adversity and made their way to us. They work very hard and they add a richness and depth to our workforce. We're very diverse and we're lucky to have them in Winnipeg," she said.

"We're an organization that cares about the people within our walls and beyond our walls."

Palliser has once again made the list of Manitoba's Top Employers. But it didn't get there just through

its hiring practices. The culture and benefits are big part of the attraction to any good company and Palliser works hard to make sure its offering to employees continues to remain competitive.

"That's something every company needs to do to make sure they're current and up to date. Palliser is very people-oriented and wants to make sure our people feel supported and rewarded, making Palliser a place they are proud to be a part of," she said.

The company also has a very active social committee that plans a wide variety of events for the staff throughout the year, as well as charitable initiatives at agencies such as Siloam Mission and Main Street Project.

"We collect tins for the bin but we also create hampers for people within our own Palliser community who may be able to use them. We give out but we take care of our own people, too," she said.

As part of its health and wellness plan,

Palliser recently launched the "Calm Zone" initiative that invites staff to take part in guided meditation and low-impact stretching and yoga over the lunch hour.

Other benefits for employees include tuition subsidies, paying employee prices on made-to-order furniture and access to wholesale pricing at EQ3, a division of the Palliser group of companies.

In addition, Palliser is setting itself up for a bright future. The company recently opened a new office workspace in Winnipeg that was designed to encourage teamwork and communication. It features plenty of natural light, a modern environment and open work areas.

"We are moving into a new way of working to drive innovation, collaboration and energy," she said. "It's an exciting time to be part of a company with such a rich history, and an exciting future."



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RAPID RTC

TEAM SPIRIT DRIVES INNOVATION

BY NEIL COLIGAN



When was the last time you've had a quality and fast response from a dealership during your car-purchasing journey?

For Winnipeg-based RAPID RTC, that purchasing experience is the on-ramp to a successful business.

"Our mission is to empower salespeople to deliver the best first impression in the automotive industry, by responding to every lead, every time with personalized experience," says RAPID RTC founder and CEO Glen Demetrio.

RAPID RTC provides this unique software and service to 50 dealerships in Manitoba, with about 3,000 clients worldwide, including North America and Europe.

The company began in 1996 when Demetrio, a new car sales manager, and his wife Sharon founded DMT Development Systems Group Inc. Demetrio was already creating software in his spare time. His

goal was to deliver a better experience for customers while making sure salespeople like himself got the leads they needed in as short a time as possible.

That effort finally paid off with RAPID RTC Lead Manager, a suite of software tools, such as Chat and Text, that can immediately send notices to the devices of salespeople when a potential customer posts a question.

"Whoever gets that lead first can respond to it," says Demetrio. "To date we're the only provider of this type of invention in the automotive space."

Although RAPID RTC is a global company with 300 employees, most of them are located here in Winnipeg at the University of Manitoba's high-tech Smartpark Research Park. Smartpark's vision statement "Building a Community of Innovators" is something Demetrio says is at the core of RAPID RTC.

"Our team of LEADERS has built everything from scratch, and we've used that source code to propel new ideas into the marketplace," he says. "We look for individuals who are innovative, collaborative and view challenges as opportunities to succeed to join our growing team."

Some of that mindset is found right next door at the University of Manitoba.

"We've had the opportunity multiple times to speak to students, provide them insight into what it's like to have a career in IT. Our ties to the university are very strong," says Demetrio.

So strong that starting last semester the company began providing a \$2,500 scholarship to students in computer science. That scholarship is part of a five-year agreement with the university.

Having a husband and wife team as ownership fosters a family environment with accommodative and flexible benefits for all employees. New hires start with three weeks of paid vacation and three family days each year, encouraging a work-life balance.

Demetrio says while his company attracts employees who are innovative thinkers, they must also know the value of being part of a team.

"If they feel like they are giving to the project, and they actually have a say in the direction, that provides the highest reward back to anyone, and that's what we're focused on," he says.

Demetrio says all that hard work is

celebrated with many family events, such as company sponsored food truck wars, bowling nights and a highly-anticipated May long weekend "Amazing Race/Scavenger Hunt" activity.

RAPID RTC also supports employees who give back to the community. The company calls it Humanitarian Day.

"Humanitarian Day is one paid day per year we give to employees to give back to the community in any way they feel has a meaningful impact," says Demetrio. "If they want to volunteer in their child's school classroom, they can do so. If they want to go to a food bank and distribute food, they can do so. There's no real limitation other than it's helping people in need."

For the past few years the company has also encouraged employees to work collectively with a donation drive called Payroll for the Needy. Last year, RAPID RTC employees donated \$147,000 to the Children's Wish Foundation. Previous recipients of its employee generosity have included the Children's Hospital, the Salvation Army and the Christmas Cheer Board.

RAPID RTC

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RED RIVER COLLEGE

CONNECTION IS KEY AT RED RIVER COLLEGE

Red River College's staff and faculty are one of its greatest resources. A big reason why is their connection to industry, and that connection is also why many students choose an RRC education here in Manitoba.

That connection to industry doesn't only enrich learning at RRC, it allows the College to ensure its employees are supported in their work, and that's why the College has continued to make Manitoba's Top Employer list for the past 10 years in a row.

What they're doing is listening

With a resource this valuable, it's important for the College to ensure it's creating a workplace where employees feel valued, fulfilled and supported. That's why RRC has made employee engagement a strategic priority. Its leaders understand that when employees are engaged in their work, they're happier and more productive, and that ultimately translates to greater success in the workplace and the classroom.

This fall, they launched a new employee engagement initiative, starting with a new employee engagement survey. What's different about this initiative – compared to

previous initiatives from the College – is that the College will be sharing the survey results and acting on them. They'll also be building on the survey with employee focus groups in the new year too.

"Everyone's voice matters. We want to learn more about an employee's experience working here so that we can work together to build a strong culture," says Melanie Gudmundson, Chief Human Resource Officer.

Meeting industry where it's at

State-of-the-art facilities? They've got that too. The College continues to create and make new investments in learning spaces, like the Skilled Trades and Technology Centre or the Innovation Centre (set to be complete next winter), to support students,

faculty and industry. Modern facilities enrich the applied learning environment and ensure that faculty have access to the latest equipment and spaces to ensure their students are well-equipped after graduation.

"When people outside the College see what we're doing here, they want to be a part of it. Employees are proud to say they work here because they know they're doing big and innovative things," says Gudmundson.

The College's new Skilled Trades and Technology Centre is a great example of this. Taking up 100,000 square feet on the Notre Dame Campus, the Centre is home to the teachings of skilled trades, but also supports innovation in technology and applied research. Everything about the space is bigger and better when it comes to window size, lighting, idea boards, air quality and more. The conversation of what learning spaces of the future will look like will continue because of dedicated instructors who

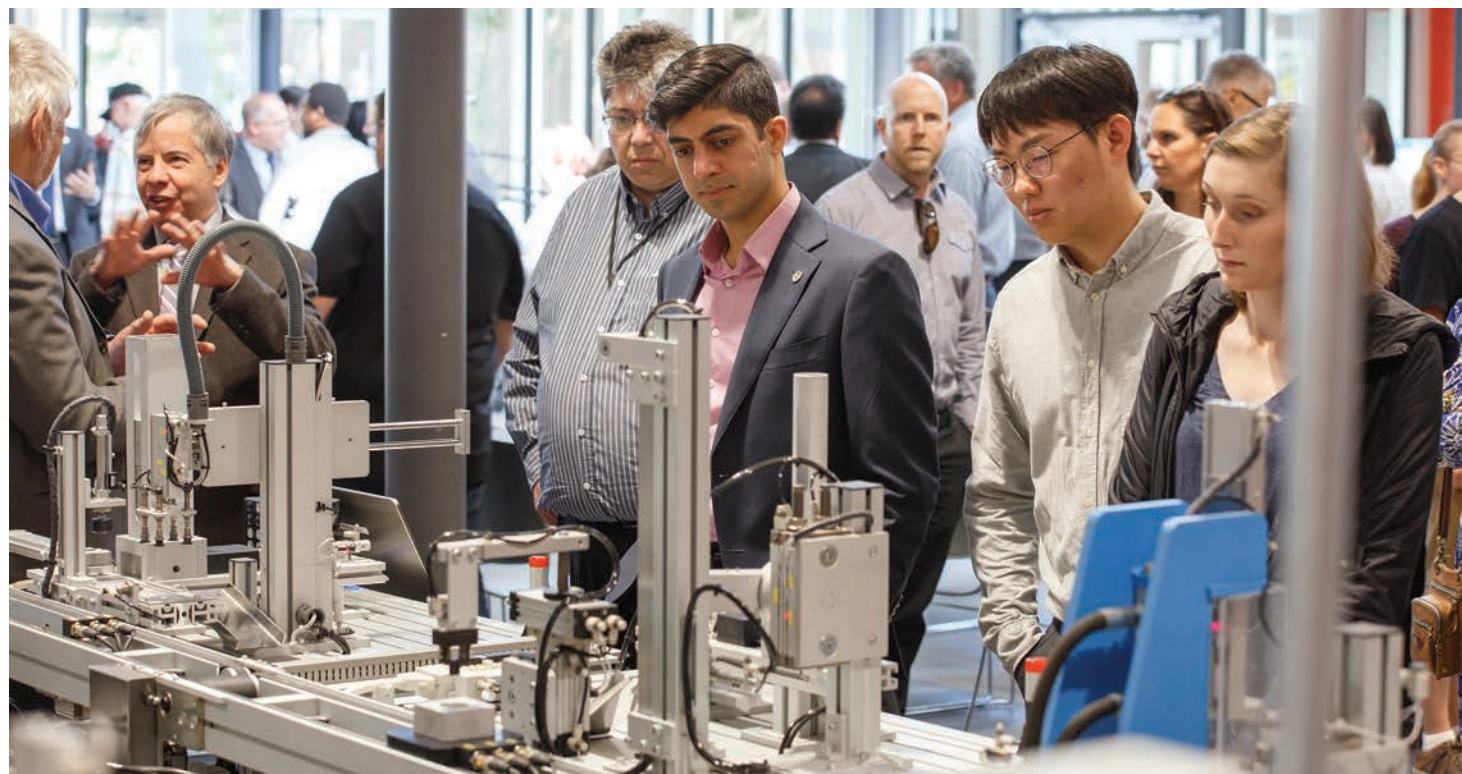
are always thinking about what the future of teaching and work look like.

Supporting employees every day

College employees are driven by the success of students, but the institute also ensures employees have the resources they need in order to succeed as well. The College's innovative work attracts talented employees, and these employees stay because they believe in the bright future the College promises.

"Our connections with industries and our employees continue to make Red River College recognized as a Top Employer of choice in our province, and across the globe too," says Gudmundson.

Innovative people and places connect the dots at Red River College.



WHAT WE'RE DOING IS WORKING.

ROQUETTE CANADA LTD.

CULTIVATING A SUCCESSFUL WORKPLACE

BY TODD LEWYS

While some companies struggle to find ways to attract and retain younger workers, Roquette – a global pioneer of plant-based specialty proteins for the food, nutrition and health markets that's been in business since 1933 — has not.

There's a simple reason, says Anu Baldner, Roquette's Manitoba director of human resources.

"We work hard at getting to know what makes our employees tick," she says. "We've found they want to work for a company that's considerate of their needs, that promotes community involvement, and that recognizes the importance of innovation and sustainability."

Indeed, a key part of Roquette's company culture is a commitment to both the health of consumers and the health of the environment, something that comes naturally to the company as a producer of natural, healthy food ingredients.

"A new focus on healthy lifestyles and the health of the planet is driving a revolution in the food industry. Consumers want products

that are healthy for them, and that are sourced and created sustainably – without harming the environment," says Jim Bozikis, Head of Communications and Public Affairs for Roquette in the Americas.

"Because of that focus, the demand for plant proteins is growing explosively in the human nutrition market, particularly for new and innovative sources such as peas," Bozikis says.

One of the ways Roquette will meet that demand is by opening the world's largest pea protein processing plant here in Manitoba. The new plant, expected to begin operation at the end of 2020 in Portage la Prairie, will join Roquette's existing pea protein plant in France. Their combined pea-processing capacity will be the largest in the world.

While Roquette looks to staff that new plant with dedicated, hard-working employees, the family-oriented company also recognizes the importance of maintaining a good work-life balance.

Consequently, both recent grads — not to mention longtime employees — are encouraged to get involved in the community they work and live in.

"Recent graduates want to make a difference, and to them that means getting out into the community to help make it a better place. We're all for that," she says. "The better an employee's work-life balance is, the happier they'll be. That translates into better performance at work."

At the same time, Roquette's management team strives to engage employees, new and old, on several levels.

"Our management team maintains an open-door policy and works hard at communicating clearly with employees. They also conduct plenty of team-building exercises to help people get to know each other better. The better everyone communicates, the better we're going to do as an organization."

Baldner adds that recent grads also

appreciate Roquette's strong commitment to wellness.

"We give, not just new employees, but all employees incentives for fitness memberships and actively promote nutrition and weight management. We're genuinely concerned about the health of our employees. I think they recognize that."

What's the secret behind Roquette's uncanny ability to attract and retain employees?

"I think our employees first and foremost see great value in what we do as a company: We imagine and offer innovative ingredients to satisfy our customers' needs worldwide," says Bozikis. "The people who make up our company also value the family heritage and strong values at the heart of our organization's culture. That's what drives our vision of long-term growth for the benefit of our employees, our customers and for our planet."



We're Ha'Pea to be one of Manitoba's Top Employers for 2020!

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ST.AMANT

Every organization has a place on its walls where carefully-selected words describing its mission, vision, and values are on display for all to see.

Rarely, however, do you find genuine truth between the words on the walls and the living DNA of a workplace's culture.

This is the ninth year St.Amant is being recognized as one of Manitoba's Top Employers, and its investments in people continue paying off.

"We're expanding our values-based culture with a people-first focus. Our staff know they're respected and appreciated, so they consistently go above and beyond to provide outstanding support and service for more than 2,000 people with developmental disabilities and autism," said Shirley Labossière, St.Amant's acting president and CEO.

Labossière says this year's award is another opportunity to talk about a few things many people don't know about St.Amant.

Today, 85 per cent of St.Amant's work happens in Manitoba communities and in Winnipeg neighbourhoods; not inside the original buildings at 440 River Road in St. Vital.

"Our teams support people with developmental disabilities and autism in approximately 80 independent homes now. We have four community-based St.Amant early learning autism sites, and we're working with children and families in nearly 50 First Nations commu-

nities across Manitoba through Jordan's Principle," she said, adding St.Amant has a mandate through Jordan's Principle that includes providing holistic clinical supports to children, and delivering training and education to meet the learning goals that community-based programs have set for themselves.

St.Amant was once known as a place where people with disabilities would spend most of their lives. Today, the 440 River Road location is a place where people come to receive short-term health and stabilization services, before they return to their homes.

Over the past five years, St.Amant has supported families in the process of moving 55 people into their own homes, where they can choose where to live, and are supported to become more fully-included and independent in their communities.

The more than 700 staff in St.Amant's community residential program not only provide

basic daily life supports, they also enable and advocate for meaningful social inclusion opportunities, jobs, and friendships.

As a large, multi-faceted resource for Manitobans with developmental disabilities and autism, St.Amant now employs more than 1,800 staff.

There is a strong focus on personalized and ongoing professional development, with continuous opportunities for staff to enjoy long-term, rewarding career growth.

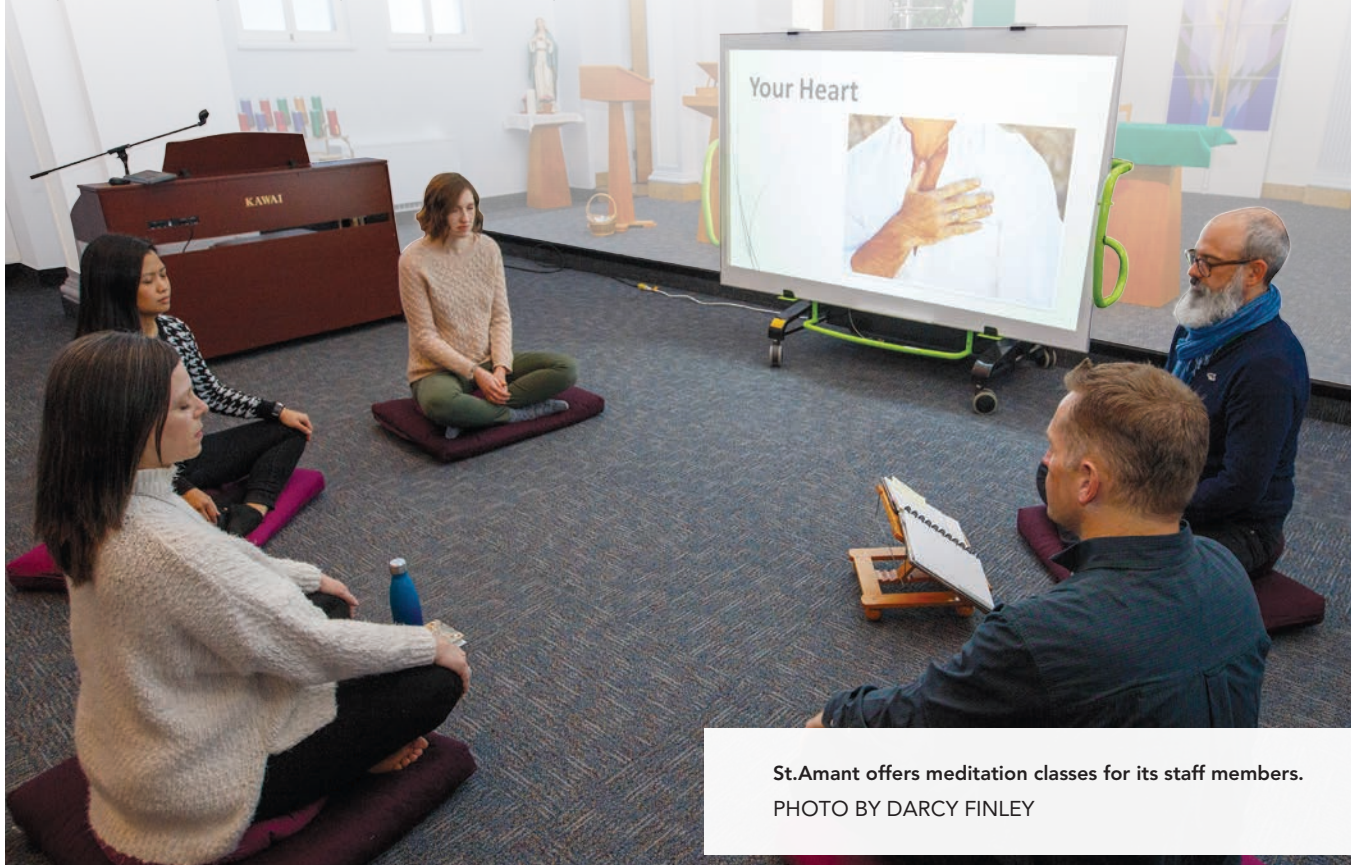
Mindfulness is now a core competency for all staff, and St.Amant is operationalizing the practice across the organization, recognizing the scientifically-proven positive benefits. Training topics include mindfulness at work, mindful self-compassion, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and even silent retreats.

Training opportunities include two-hour sessions, eight-week half-day sessions, and up to five-day silent retreats.

"Our holistic approach to work is essential. A connected and mindfully-present staff person can provide the most engaged and meaningful experiences to people we support, and their families," said Jennifer Kilimnik, St.Amant's director of human resources.

St.Amant is also known for its leadership in Manitoba's disability rights movement, and played a pivotal role in the Disability Matters Vote campaign, held during the provincial election. DMVote united thousands of Manitobans in the call for dignified incomes for people with long-term disabilities, fair wages for direct support professionals, timely access to critical services, and employment.

To explore St.Amant, check out their Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and browse all the exciting career opportunities at stamant.ca.



St.Amant offers meditation classes for its staff members.
PHOTO BY DARCY FINLEY



St.Amant



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- Excellent benefits and pension plan
- Quality professional development



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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

With two centuries of experience in providing quality, well-rounded education for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, St. John's-Ravenscourt School (SJR) has built an impressive school community and a proud history, based on four pillars — academic excellence, creative expression, active healthy living and social responsibility.

This shared commitment to achieving personal and educational excellence draws students from around the world, as well as educators and support staff who each play an important role in contributing to this independent, co-educational day and boarding school's outstanding reputation.

For the 12th year in a row, SJR was named one of Manitoba's Top Employers, a distinction that reflects the school's success in developing an attractive working environment for its multi-talented staff, which includes 153 full-time and 18 part-time employees as of March 1, 2019.

"Many of our staff have been recognized as leaders in the field of education, as well as in coaching, writing and music," says Lindsay Stovel, SJR's Director of Admissions and Marketing. "The commitment of the school to community service locally, regionally and globally is second to none."

In recruiting and retaining talented professionals, SJR offers competitive salaries, attractive benefits packages, and a stimulating work environment. The scenic 23-acre school campus is situated on the banks of the Red River, surrounded by Winnipeg's Wildwood Park community, and offers some of the finest facilities of any independent school in Canada.

Staff have access to the school's impressive fitness facility and participate in SJR's subsidized breakfast, lunch and dinner programs. Faculty members are allowed

five days per year to pursue professional development opportunities including many on-campus mentoring programs, in-house training and apprenticeship/skilled trades programs. SJR pays up to \$2,500 in tuition subsidies per year for staff taking work-related courses.

While the average work day spans 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., there are opportunities for flex-time, particularly during the summer months. Employees also enjoy three paid, extended long weekends per year. Faculty members receive an extra week of vacation at both spring and summer breaks.

New administrative employees at SJR start with an allotment of three weeks of paid vacation, while teachers are granted 12 weeks. Both staff groups receive two paid personal days per year, as well as the paid holiday school closure period between Christmas and New Year.

SJR's staff benefits package includes Manitoba Blue Cross coverage, a defined-benefit pension plan and retirement planning assistance, and phased-in work options for those nearing the end of their careers at the school.

There is a maternity leave top-up for mothers, up to 90 per cent of salary for 17 weeks, followed by parental leave top-up for new moms up to 90 per cent of salary

for an additional 10 weeks. New fathers and adoptive parents are eligible for a top-up of up to 90 per cent of salary for 10 weeks. Staff can opt to extend their parental leaves into unpaid leaves of absence. SJR also offers reduced tuition fees for employees' children who qualify for school admission.

One of SJR's guiding principles is social responsibility, so supporting important causes is an integral part of campus life. Staff receive paid time-off for volunteerism, as well as having a great many opportunities to contribute to worthy causes as members of the school community. Students' and staff philanthropic efforts have helped a wide variety of community initiatives including

In 2020 SJR celebrates 200 years of academic excellence and 12 straight years as one of Manitoba's Top Employers.

SJR PHOTO

Koats for Kids, Canadian Red Cross, Terry Fox Run, D'Arcy's ARC, Agape Table, Project 11, Operation Christmas Child and the CancerCare Manitoba Foundation.

As Western Canada's oldest independent day and boarding school, SJR will celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2020. A full slate of special events is planned to mark this extraordinary milestone, including a gala evening in September for current and former students, staff, and families.

For more information about career opportunities at SJR, and the school's 200th anniversary, go to sjr.mb.ca.





TURN LEARNERS INTO LEADERS

sjr.mb.ca



St. John's-Ravenscourt School

DEVELOPING AS A TEAM

Development is a big part of the hockey business. Hockey players train daily to master their craft, and developing players from prospects to the Manitoba Moose, and then to the Winnipeg Jets is integral for success at True North Sports + Entertainment. While True North employees may not say that they go to “practice” or “get called up” like hockey players do, they still strive for continuous improvement, personally and collectively, each day at their workplaces.

That isn’t just because continuous improvement is one of True North’s organizational values, and they aren’t just words to rally employees around. They’re words that define how True North does business.

“True North has always strived to be a consistent source of pride in the community,” said John Olfert, President and Chief Operating Officer. “Improvement plays into that goal. If we each continue to better ourselves, we will better our organization as a whole. Through that, we can start to make an impact in our community together.”

Goal setting is of course a big part of improving, and with almost 270 full-time employees and 1,500 part-time employees, conveying to each of them how their roles are contributing to the bigger picture is integral. Communicating the larger organizational goals, and then challenging employees to identify how they can help to achieve those goals, has become a big part of True North’s organizational strategy.

“We have an extremely diverse group of employees,” noted Dawn Haus, Vice

President of Human Resources. “We have several venues that our people work at, and they work in a variety of areas from building operations, to ticket sales, to creative design, and much more, but our differences are what make us much stronger. We’re capable of achieving a lot more because we all bring something different to the table.”

True North has demonstrated its commitment to its team by making learning and development a priority for all employees, offering various training sessions and courses. Through the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, employees are guided in how they can develop self-leadership, productivity, and goal setting. For those developing in leadership roles, learning how they can develop others comes through the study of 6 Critical Practices, and 4 Essential Roles of Leadership. Not only has this helped employees grow together across departments, but it has created a culture

of learning; giving True North a common vocabulary related to the aforementioned topics, and providing the opportunity for True North leaders to lead and facilitate the learning.

“Providing the tools for development is only one part of the equation,” said Olfert. “Creating that type of culture requires work and engagement from our employees too, and we have such hard-working employees who are dedicated to what we are doing. That certainly goes for our external initiatives whether that be with our hockey teams, events, or venues, but that also applies to the work that we do internally.”

Part of that culture is achieved in the workplace, with events like lunch and learns, or “All Hands Meetings.” Equally important though, is the culture that is developed outside of True North’s offices and workspaces at events like their annual Camp Day at Camp Manitou, holiday service

day, summer intramurals, and more.

The culture of not only learning and development, but togetherness has even prompted some employee-led events over the past year, including outdoor hockey and softball tournaments.

“Employee engagement isn’t a switch we can turn on,” said Haus. “We do our best to create conditions for engagement where employees feel like valued members of a winning team doing meaningful work in an environment of trust. That makes it both rewarding and humbling to see employees engage in our culture, and then raise the bar by investing in it and contributing to it too.”

Whether in goal setting, learning, development, or engagement, and no matter how much growth and change True North experiences, one thing will remain constant for the organization: ensuring that they are doing it together as a team.



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EVERY DAY WE STRIVE TO HOLD OUR VALUES AS AN INARGUABLE TRUTH.



TrueNorth
SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT
PROUD TO BE ONE OF
MANITOBA'S TOP 30 EMPLOYERS

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

INCLUSIVENESS DRIVES U OF M

BY JIM BENDER

***Gaa wii ji'i diyaang* is an Anishinaabe word for "walking together, helping each other."**

That name was gifted by Elder Margaret Lavallee to a group at the University of Manitoba, but its meaning could also be central to the university's approach to diversity, inclusion and awareness.

"It's a great council to support one another and find solutions to problems," says Val Williams, the U of M's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Facilitator, Human Resources. "Our goal is to walk together and help each other."

It is a goal for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and staff "working together to ensure that the university campuses are a place where good relationships are being built and we're working towards reconciliation," adds Ruth Shead, Coordinator for Indigenous Achievement at the U of M.

"There can be cross-cultural challenges, so we try to introduce Indigenous ways of learning," she says. "We are making progress." Shead cites the introduction of an Indigenous Scholars Fund to support new faculty positions, and an Indigenous Initiatives Fund open to administrative units as well as to faculties, schools, colleges and libraries.

Gaa wii ji'i diyaang is among the 48 Indigenous projects that have been funded out of the U of M budget as a result of that initiatives fund. Others include an Indigenous Summer Student Internship Program; an Indigenous Languages Elders-in-Residence Program in the Faculty of Arts; and the revitalization of

the Traditional Medicine Garden at the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences on the Bannatyne campus, with knowledge-strengthening around traditional medicines and teachings open to all.

"Over the past five years, we've also created an Indigenous newsletter," she adds, "and this year, four different Indigenous languages are being taught by the department of Native studies — that's never happened before."

Some of the many reasons why the U of M was named as a Top Employer for the seventh straight year include its commitment to diversity, inclusion, Indigenous leadership and opportunities for building reconciliation, and Indigenous achievement and awareness. There are recent initiatives such as the hiring of Dr. Catherine Cook as Vice-President (Indigenous), a new position; launching a new self-declaration survey (UCount) in support of its ongoing commitment to increase student, staff, faculty and leadership diversity that reflects society; and establishing the President's Task Force

on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to look at obstacles and inequities in those areas.

That includes people belonging to any nationality, religion or gender or to the LGBTQ2+ community, Williams says.

"Inclusion is for everyone," she says. "Getting to know people and building relationships goes a long way toward a diverse culture. It's critical. We have a diverse community here and are committed to creating a welcoming environment in which any individual or group can be and feel respected, supported and valued to fully participate."

She notes that this falls into the university's priorities, as listed on its website, of creating pathways to Indigenous achievement; building a community that creates an outstanding learning and work environment; and forging connections.

"To be named a Top Employer is really a great thing to hear," Shead says. "Through sharing Indigenous knowledges, culture, research and perspectives, and offering

learning opportunities at the University of Manitoba, we can build relationships that ensure we build a better future for everyone."

There are many related learning opportunities and resources for employees at the U of M, including diversity and inclusion consultations, workshops on building cultural capacity and tools to assess progress. Events open to everyone — such as the Indigenous Scholars Speaker Series and the Unsettling Ideas Book Club to spur community discussions around anti-racism, decolonization and reconciliation — take place almost every day of the year.

Much of the change has also been driven from the grassroots level, and there's still work left to do. "We've done well, but we have to do better," says Williams. "We're on a journey. We have not arrived."

"There's no 'other' in this community," she says. "We're in this together. We're stronger together and we will all benefit from an inclusive culture."



Community unleashes potential.

When we inspire one another, there is no limit to what we can do.

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WINNIPEG AIRPORTS AUTHORITY INC.

Some of the Winnipeg Airports Authority team. PHOTO BY DARCY FINLEY

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

BY JIM TIMLICK

Winnipeg Airports Authority (WAA) typically ranks among Manitoba's Top Employers each year, but it's hardly what you might consider a typical workplace.

Consider the fact it serves more than 4.5 million customers annually, including a sizeable chunk from all over the world. It also works in conjunction with a number of high-profile industry partners, has to follow strict federal regulations, has made investing in the community one of its guiding principles and controls hundreds of acres of prime real estate.

"No, this is not a typical work environment," says WAA president and CEO Barry Rempel with a chuckle.

"It's a place of work but its impact is much broader than what you might see in other companies. I likened it the other day to being

a choreographer in a ballet. Every day we have to co-ordinate not just with our own operations but work with our supply chain partners in delivering this miracle of flight. In addition to making sure the lights and heat are on, we have to make sure we have the right people in place at the right time."

This year marks the ninth consecutive time — and 10th time overall — the WAA has been included on the Manitoba's Top Employers list since the program was established in 2008.

Making the list is no easy task, and that's especially true in the case of the WAA, which employs nearly 200 people at Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport as well as at smaller regional airports it's contracted to operate in The Pas, Dawson Creek, B.C., and Iqaluit, Nunavut.

"Delivering excellence in service and facilities doesn't happen without having good people in place," Rempel says when asked why the not-for-profit corporation annually ranks among the province's Top Employers.

"I think what's at the heart of it is that in living our values as an organization

we're listening to what's important to our employees, especially from a benefits and wellness perspective. It's really about trying to keep those lines of communication open."

As part of its emphasis on maintaining those open lines of communications, the WAA engages in bi-annual surveys with all of its employees. The most recent voluntary survey received participation from more than 80 per cent of staff. The organization also holds quarterly meetings with employees to share the latest information on what's happening at all of its operations.

WAA employees are also encouraged to get involved in the organization's charitable efforts in the community and receive paid volunteer time along with their own charitable donations being matched by their employer. To date, the WAA and its employees have donated more than 65,000 pounds of vegetables to Winnipeg Harvest through the Grow-a-Row program. They are also major supporters of the United Way and its plane pull fundraising event, Siloam Mission, the 220 Red River Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron for inner-city youth and the Girls in Aviation Day initiative.

While working in such a fast-paced environment can be challenging, the WAA has placed an emphasis on helping employees maintain their physical and mental well-being.

Employees receive free access to an onsite fitness facility. The WAA also recently introduced a lifestyle spending account which employees can use to pay for anything from yoga classes to recreational hockey. And along with three weeks of starting vacation, the WAA offers up to five paid personal days along with flexible work arrangements to help employees maintain a proper work-life balance.

In addition, the WAA provides offers generous maternity and parental leave top-up payments for new moms (up to 93 per cent of their salary for 32 weeks) as well as parental leave top-up for new fathers and adoptive parents (up to 93 per cent for 15 weeks). Full-time employees can also extend their leave into an unpaid leave of absence.

Rempel says such offerings provide a win for both the WAA and its employees.

"It's important that people have lives outside of work and have a work-life balance," Rempel says. "That balance requires you to keep family commitments, to keep commitments to yourself in terms of things like wellness and getting involved in community events. The end result is that when they're here at work they're present and focused and they're able to contribute and be really engaged employees."

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waa.ca

Photography courtesy of Laird Kay

PREVENTION EFFORTS EXTEND TO WCB STAFF

Mention the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba to most people, and the role of an insurance provider comes to mind. But during the most recent part of its 102-year history, the WCB has steadily increased its focus on the prevention of workplace injury and illness. More specifically, in 2014, the WCB created a new division called SAFE Work Manitoba, with a single focus on preventing injuries. Since then, through combined efforts with other safety organizations, Manitoba's time loss injury rate (reflecting the number of workers who missed time on the job due to injury) has dropped more than 16 per cent.

Given the importance of maintaining safe workplaces, the WCB has also placed a higher priority on striving to meet the safety and health needs of its own staff members. It's an important part of the reason the WCB was recently recognized as one of Manitoba's Top Employers for the ninth year in a row.

"Our strategy to keep Manitoba workplaces safe and healthy includes our own employees. They're a big reason for our success, and it's important that they work in an environment where

they feel safe, valued and respected," says Winston Maharaj, President and Chief Executive Officer of the WCB.

To that end, the WCB offers many ways for employees to maximize their physical and psychological health, as well as take advantage of opportunities for professional development. Wellness programming is available throughout the year, with offerings updated on a quarterly basis, including fitness courses such as yoga, Pilates and strength training.

Consistent with the WCB's prevention approach, mental health is a critical component of overall safety and health for staff. Resiliency workshops, mental health first aid training and mindfulness-based stress reduction are offered at various times throughout the year. Lunch-hour sessions include such topics as stress management, sleep quality and managing grief. The WCB celebrates Mental Health Week annually

with activities, contests and seminars aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of mental health, while also reducing the stigma that often accompanies it.

"For much of our history, physical health was the sole focus of employee safety and health," says Shannon Earle, Vice-President, Human Resources and Strategy. "We now recognize that psychological health is just as important, and this is reflected in our approach to keeping our own staff safe and healthy."

Learning and development is another way employees are supported. The WCB strives to ensure that employees are able to pursue training and education that contributes to success in their current roles and helps to develop skills for the future. It provides staff members with numerous learning opportunities, including courses offered through post-secondary institutions and professional conferences. In addition, in-

house training is available through a variety of workshops on such topics as leadership and prevention of workplace harassment.

The overall goal is not unlike the WCB's mission to help achieve a culture of safety in workplaces throughout Manitoba, says Maharaj. "As we focus on workplace safety and health, we've spoken a lot about the importance of creating a positive culture. It's a high priority to expand that positive culture in our own workplace. We want to ensure that we offer an atmosphere of safety, inclusion and respect to all our staff members."

The WCB looks forward to continuing to be an employer of choice for Manitobans, says Maharaj. "We're proud of our record of attaining Top Employer status for the last nine consecutive years. As well as being a source of pride for the WCB, this recognition helps us to continue to attract and hire outstanding people and offer the best service possible to our customers."



WCB does.



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A STUNNING TRANSFORMATION

The 20th edition of Canada's Top 100 Employers highlights how much has changed in the workplace over two decades.

BY BERTON WOODWARD

If you recently came into the workplace as a young recruit at one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, you're probably very familiar with such phrases as "bring your whole self to work," "employee wellness" and "parental leave top-ups."

You may even think these ideas have been around forever. But in that case, ask some of your older colleagues when they first heard those words. Almost surely, they will talk about some point in the last 20 years.

So much has changed in employment practices in the last two decades that a staffer from the year 2000 might only barely recognize the workplace of today. But she or he would definitely like it better.

All of these trends have been faithfully charted in the annual Canada's Top 100 Employers list, which was first published in 2000. This is the 20th edition in the series, a cause for celebration and for looking forward.

"The amount of change is truly stunning," says Richard Yerema, who has served as managing editor of the MediCorp Canada project since that first issue. "If I were to review an employer today from 20 years ago, I would probably be asking, why are there so many holes in their data set? Why is this applicant missing so many policies?"

Yerema says that over the years, incrementally, Canadians have seen the workplace transformed as employers have adapted to changes in society to ensure they can attract a continuing

flow of top talent. "Look at the evolution in how we work," he says. "When we used to write about working at home, that was a novelty — we called it telecommuting. Now you have the flexibility to work wherever you happen to be sitting. That has changed many professions and how people function and even think about work — the interconnectedness of our jobs and how they integrate with our lives."

Or take vacation time. "When we started, a lot of employers would have two weeks minimum to start," he says. "That's now unheard of among the annual winners." Today's table stakes are easily three weeks to start, with some employers offering four weeks — or even no limit.

Perhaps most dramatic has been the evolution in family-friendly policies. "In the early editions, we would write about a six-month maternity leave for a new mom, and top-up was an almost unknown concept," says Yerema. "Now we see generous maternity and parental leave policies that extend to new dads and adoptive parents. Some of the top-ups provide 90 per cent of salary for 52 weeks."

Yerema says the progressive family policies have contributed to the continuing rise in the number of women in the workplace. "Twenty years ago, it was almost a penalty if you were going to decide to raise a family and have a career," he notes. At the same time, Top Employers have supported a wide range of measures to boost the proportion of women in senior

positions, from specialized leadership training to employee resource groups.

In fact, the spread of ERGs — internal networking groups based on a common identity or interest — has helped advance the enlightened diversity and inclusion policies that now are embedded in every Top Employer. The visibility and strong support of LGBTQ2+ people has blossomed in recent years, particularly as organizations embraced the inclusive idea of "bring your whole self to work."

Workplaces themselves are changing as well, with open, collaborative spaces, often a lot of light, and all those wellness programs, from in-house yoga to personal counselling.

Today, many employers say they use Canada's Top 100 Employers to benchmark what they need to offer to compete for the best people. "Through this project you can actually see what the best vacation policies are, what the best parental leave policies are, and how they're changing," says Yerema. "We have witnessed employers discovering where they could improve, making changes, and becoming part of the list themselves."

And, of course, the list — and its coveted logo — has been a critical tool for Canadian job-seekers for two decades. "Whether you're starting out or looking for a change," says Yerema, "this has always been the place to get a detailed look inside the best employers across Canada, see where you're likely to fit in and perhaps find a spot to spend your career."

So much has changed in employment practices in the last two decades that a staffer from the year 2000 might only barely recognize the workplace of today. But she or he would definitely like it better.



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