



**MANITOBA'S  
TOP EMPLOYERS**

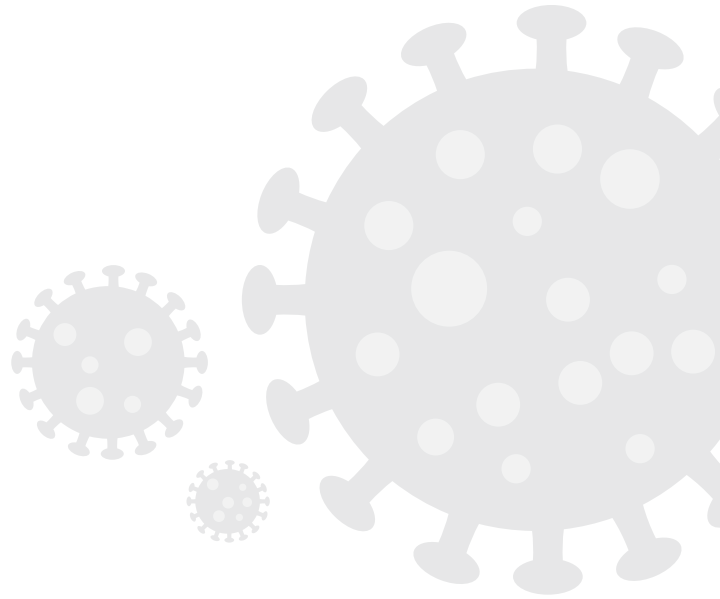


# MANITOBA'S TOP EMPLOYERS 2021

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# COMMUNICATION MEANS SUCCESS

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

**Anybody can run a company during the good times but it takes a special kind of leadership at the helm during a global pandemic.**

COVID-19 wasn't even a thing when last year's Canada's Top 100 Employers were announced a year ago but the coronavirus has very much put the top employers to the test — and pretty much everyone else — this year.

Richard Yerema, the program's managing editor, said employers have been challenged like never before in 2020 starting when employees set up home offices when the lockdown was imposed in the spring. Many of them have been there ever since.

The most successful companies during this most trying of years already had wide-open communication with their people so employees understood what was going on every step of the way.

"People are looking for leadership. They want to know 'what's happening? Are we OK?' Companies that have been innovative and communicated well with their people have done better. When things return to normal, the organizations that did a good job of calming their people will have a running start," he said.

"Some of the things they've done (this year) will pay off in the long run."

Many companies that already had robust communication strategies, including regular meetings with their CEO or senior executives to discuss the matters of the day, were able to make the transition to remote workplaces without a hitch, he said.

"When you hear rumours, you want to cut those off. When people are at home, online town halls and social gatherings, such as online yoga classes, help keep people in touch," he said.

Yerema and his team have long trumpeted innovative organizations that embraced the latest technology and offered more flexible working arrangements but they often applied in one-off situations, such as a new mother or father re-entering the workforce or a parent dealing with a sick child for a day or two.

"Having the ability to work from home and having that culture already developed has been a great strength (for many companies). They expanded it or tweaked it to roles

that might not have had it before," he said.

Canada's Top 100 Employers is in its 21st year nationally and its 15th year in Manitoba.

Here's how the competition works: each employer is graded 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.

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

For all the competitions, including Manitoba, the winners aren't ranked but are instead listed alphabetically.

While some employers undoubtedly worry their people are goofing off during the middle of the afternoon, the forward-thinking managers are ensuring employees make sure to take some time for themselves during the day or evening.

"Personal time isn't necessarily time away from the office when your work is sitting there in your living room. Separating your space out is very important. It's a kind of a learning curve (where you realize) 'I'm not at work anymore,'" he said.

Of course, it's understandable for some employees to feel stress with the new working arrangements. The people they sit next to at the office can be like a second family. Listening to daily COVID-19 updates from provincial health officials and politicians can be downright depressing, too. So, having some kind of mental health support as part of a company's health benefits can pay both immediate and long-term dividends.

"Having online health services or access to the best doctors built into a health program can be very helpful to people working off-site. That includes flexible time-off policies, paid or unpaid leaves of absence and generous vacation time, too," Yerema said.





**The most successful companies** during this most trying of years already had wide-open communication with their people so employees understood what was going on every step of the way.



- ABORIGINAL PEOPLES TELEVISION NETWORK INC. (APTN)
- ACCESS CREDIT UNION LIMITED
- ARCTIC CO-OPERATIVES LIMITED
- ARTIS REIT
- ASSINIBOINE CREDIT UNION LIMITED
- BIRCHWOOD AUTOMOTIVE GROUP
- BOLD COMMERCE
- BROADVIEW NETWORKS INC.
- CANADA LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY
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- CARGILL LIMITED
- CWB NATIONAL LEASING INC.
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- MAGELLAN AEROSPACE, WINNIPEG
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## ACCESS CREDIT UNION LIMITED

# THE VALUE OF EMPOWERMENT

BY SHERRY KANIUGA

It's all about trust: At Access Credit Union, employees at every level are empowered to make decisions, share ideas and speak their minds.

These are just a few of the elements of working for the southern Manitoba credit union that saw an impressive 94 per cent of employees respond in its most recent staff survey that they were proud to work for the organization, and that contribute to Access being named one of Manitoba's Top Employers for the seventh consecutive year.

"I often hear new employees say they like that we are an employer of choice, they appreciate the idea that we're there to support them with continuous education, and they love the values of the organization," says President and Chief Executive Officer Larry Davey.

The trust factor comes in many forms. Employees are given the freedom and authority to make decisions throughout their work day that would typically demand management approval. They gather on the Community Investment Committee to evaluate major donation requests and choose, on behalf of the organization, how and where corporate contributions will be distributed. And they join the Health and Wellness Committee, which plans wellness activities and programs for all staff to promote healthy living.

Access employees are also encouraged and supported — including financially — to embrace continuous education and

career advancement, from specialized training to degree and diploma programs.

"By empowering our staff, we are allowing them to not only take care of the day-to-day business in their branches, but also to take care of their careers and their training and development," Davey says. "People know their decisions are going to have an impact on our organization, and this has been a critical part of empowering them. We trust staff to be professional and to give their best to the members, to the community and to the peers they work with."

Based in Winkler, the organization will soon expand from 260 staff in 17 branches spread out over the southern part of the province to 26 branches and about 420 employees, including in Winnipeg, when its recently approved merger with Crosstown Civic Credit Union

finalizes in January. All staff will be able to benefit from some of Access Credit Union's attractive programs, such as three weeks of vacation to start.

"Over the years, Access has been encouraging more of a work-life balance," says Anna Wieler, VP of Human Resources. "It's important for people to take time off to spend with their families, and we also give employees more flexibility in their work hours and location, when we can."

Access also puts its trust in employees to come up with creative ideas and help evaluate new tools or initiatives. A team of employees make up the Innovation Centre, testing out new technology, questioning procedures and making suggestions for improvements before new programs roll out to the individual branches. Innovation Centre staff are trained to look at things in a new light,

Davey says.

"Our people know that when a change has gone through the Innovation Centre, it's been tested and is for the benefit of our members."

Around the communities the organization operates in, it's not uncommon to see Access staff out and about, volunteering their time selflessly — both during and outside of work time — at events sponsored by Access.

"Our branches each get a budget every year to support their own communities and surrounding areas, and they decide how to spend it," Wieler explains. "We want people to see that Access is a part of their community, and that we're there for them."

**For more information, visit [accesscu.ca](http://accesscu.ca).**



ACCESS CREDIT UNION PHOTOS

ACCESS CREDIT UNION STAFF MEMBERS VOLUNTEER AND TAKE PART IN FUNDRAISING EVENTS.

work somewhere  
*innovative*  
*engaging*  
*impactful*



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CREDIT UNION  
[www.accesscu.ca](http://www.accesscu.ca)

## ARCTIC CO-OPERATIVES LIMITED

# CO-OPERATION DRIVES RESILIENCE

BY NEIL COLIGAN

If 2020 has taught Manitoba's Top Employers anything it is that co-operation is not just desired, it is essential for success, especially when it comes to dealing with COVID-19.

For Winnipeg based Arctic Co-operatives Limited (a five-time Manitoba Top Employer) that kind of work environment is in its foundation of purpose. In fact, its website states, "We pursue this vision through democratically controlled Co-operative businesses that operate on the values of fairness, equality, self responsibility and mutual self-help. Our Co-operatives believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others."

Arctic Co-operatives CEO Rod Wilson says with 32 member Co-operatives across the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut to support, it's a huge task.

"These Co-operatives rely on us for a variety of services, primarily the supply of products," says Wilson. "We also provide a host of management and technical services. Everything from human resources, learning and performance support. Technology support, accounting services, and construction of facilities."

Since March of this year, this has proved more challenging.

"As things started to migrate towards an

expansion of the virus, we quickly decided to send our staff home and to introduce them to a work-from-home environment," says Wilson.

"We had been working as part of our business continuity plans towards equipping all staff for some potential major crisis," he says. "We never envisioned that it would be what it turned out to be."

This meant most of Arctic Co-operatives' 125 employees in Winnipeg were now home-based, except for those necessary for dealing with hands-on activities such as working in the warehouse, the mailroom or at the front of office. Wilson says these employees were outfitted with the proper personal protective equipment. Workspaces were also fitted with extra enhanced protection such as shields. There are also scanning devices to assess whether someone is at risk with a higher than normal body temperature.

"We were able to very quickly respond because we had already built the foundation based on our Business Continuity Plan. We had already started to migrate towards mobile technology for a large number of our staff and within the course of about four days we were able to successfully transition from a full in-person

work environment to most of our staff working from their homes," says Wilson.

Wilson says another initiative that was foremost in importance was ensuring all employees would have financial stability, no matter what happened during the pandemic.

"From the onset we understood how much strain this would put on people," says Wilson. "That's why we made sure it was one less thing to worry about."

But what does this mean for ongoing employee development?

Prior to COVID-19, training for employees was usually done in Winnipeg in a typical classroom or workshop environment. Sometimes instructors would also fly north to conduct technical training on site.

Ed Keddy, Vice-President of Human Resources, says the pandemic presented an opportunity to adapt.

"With the pandemic we've moved towards e-learning, whether through Zoom or Teams, as well as electronic modules," says Keddy.

"This was something we were already moving towards with delivery dates of 12 to 18 months down the road, but now we've managed to adopt it within eight months," he adds.

Wilson says Arctic Co-operatives and its employees have proved resilient during this challenging time.

"The culture that we have developed has equipped us to meet this current challenge," he says. "The values that we promote have been put to the test."

Wilson, Keddy and the rest of the Arctic Co-operatives' management team hope they can all celebrate their ability to thrive in a time unlike any other and do it as a group together. If not at Christmas, at least someday soon.

Visit us at [arctic-coop.com](http://arctic-coop.com) for more info.



ARCTIC CO-OPERATIVES PHOTO  
ARCTIC CO-OPERATIVES LOGISTICS CREW MEMBERS.



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ACU PHOTO

DURING THE SUMMER, ACU EMPLOYEES SUPPORTED THEIR ANNUAL HABITAT FOR HUMANITY BUILD.

## ASSINIBOINE CREDIT UNION

# ADAPTING IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

Change brought on by forces beyond a company's control is inevitable. And if the upheaval is big enough, it may even determine if it survives.

How a company reacts and behaves during those times is a tremendous indicator of what that company is made of. 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant change to the doorstep of virtually every company around the world, including Assiniboine Credit Union. And if how ACU reacted is any indication... it's a leader. From the onset of the pandemic,

employee health and safety was made a top priority. ACU employees were enabled to work from home with secure, remote access, supported by a strong IT team. Those who continued to work on the front lines at the branches were provided personal protection equipment. Plexiglas screens were installed, hand sanitizer stations were established, and all proper social distancing protocols were also put in place. ACU staff continued to work their regular hours whether the branch was open, was operating under reduced hours, or closed to members. No employees were laid off. The ACU Business Financial Centre and Community Financial Centre provided support to members

remotely, and its Wealth Team continued to meet virtually with members. Very early in the pandemic, communication with employees was increased in order to identify any work issues quickly. The ACU People Solutions Team invited employees to share suggestions related to the work environment — both at home and in-branch — to provide the support required to remain safe and productive. ACU arranged, through its benefits provider, a virtual care clinic that enabled ACU employees to obtain medical advice without having to physically visit a clinic; all with the goal of maximizing employee and member safety. ACU also utilized the Learning Café on its corporate intranet which gave employees access to a central depository of learning tools and resources regarding physical and mental health. The commitment to this program by ACU is substantial, and it continues to share new tools and resources as they become available. An employee survey was launched in April. The response

“The way ACU handled the pandemic from the start is another reason why I love working for you.”

— ACU EMPLOYEE PULSE SURVEY

rate of 85 per cent provided valuable insights into the pandemic experience of ACU employees, who strongly believed that team members are supporting each other to get the work done; that they feel supported by their manager; and that ACU is providing effective communication during this time. A follow-up survey in August had similar results. Employees continue to be invited to share suggestions for executive consideration related to the work environment, and support required. The quotes in this article are just a small sample of what employees had to say in the survey. ACU began its return to work in May. Detailed handbooks were prepared to support leaders and employees as they returned to business as “new usual.” The guidebooks spell out required and recommended protocols including appointments with members, cleaning routines, managing waiting areas, and using common areas. While all branches resumed regular business hours on June 22, the majority of non-branch employees continue to work remotely. What are the results of all these efforts in the face of monumental change? A stronger company with an even more dedicated work force; things that go a long way in making ACU, once again, one of Manitoba's top employers.

For more information, visit [acu.ca](http://acu.ca).

## What does a rewarding career mean to you?

To our employees, it's all about having engaging and meaningful work. It means being able to use their talents fully, while being recognized for the work they do. They're proud of their role in making ACU what it is; an important part of the community providing vital services to our members, all guided by the principles of 'values-based banking'.

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## BIRCHWOOD AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

# EVERYONE'S EXPERIENCE MATTERS AT BIRCHWOOD

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

### At Birchwood Automotive Group, experience is everything.

This notion remains a driving force that steers the success of the longstanding company — and makes it stand out as one of Manitoba's Top Employers for years running.

For president Steve Chipman, the family-based company aims to create a positive experience for both employees and customers alike.

"We try to make sure our customers' experience is really great, but we also know that our team members' experience is everything," he said.

"It's important that we make sure we focus on them and provide them with opportunities. We follow some basic principles of trying to look out for each other."

As Manitoba's largest network of automotive dealers, Birchwood Automotive Group encourages a culture of generosity. "We always run a big United Way campaign, and we've had our best campaign ever in the toughest year," Chipman said.

"We try to promote the idea that we should look outward, and I think people appreciate being a part of giving back."

At the same time, the company focuses on helping and supporting its own employees. For new mothers, fathers or adoptive parents, Birchwood recently introduced maternity and parental leave top-up payments to 100 per cent of their salary for 15 weeks. Employees also have

the option to extend their leave into an unpaid leave of absence.

"We try to have programs for well-being," Chipman said. "We have an employee assistance program that helps people with financial, physical and mental health advice. It's not just for them; it's for their families, too."

With a focus on education, Birchwood ensures its employees have ongoing opportunities to learn. The company supports employee development with tuition subsidies for courses at outside institutions as well as online and in-house training, including paid internships and apprenticeships.

"We have mentorship programs, as well as a program called Birchwood University that helps our mid-management to improve their management skills. We enrol all our senior managers in a program out of Georgian College, which includes the Automotive Business School of Canada, so they're getting a diploma in automotive business management," Chipman said.

"We're promoting growth and education and giving back to the community — all things that people appreciate."

Employees also appreciate the fact the company is well poised for stability during these unstable times.

"We are a growing company and that's attractive to people. It gives everybody lots of opportunities and a chance to grow. Our business is a stable one," Chipman said.

"We just opened a new Lexus

dealership in a brand new building. We've got a Jaguar Land Rover building opening in March as well as a brand new Volkswagen store opening in March. We're also expanding and building a brand new Ford dealership and replacing the old one."

In addition to more than 20 dealerships, Birchwood Automotive Group operates two large collision centres as well as a business called Birchwood Credit, which works with people to re-establish their credit at four Winnipeg-based locations.

"We also have a large IT department and we develop lots of our own software. In addition, we have our own marketing department with marketing specialists, as well as our own reconditioning centre for used cars," Chipman said.

"We have a centralized accounting department, which is unique, and all

of our accountants are working out of one building. So we have all sorts of opportunities and experiences available in various aspects of our business."

With a focus on inclusivity and flexibility, the company is able to adapt to changing times.

"We're diverse with about 15 different languages spoken. We're also a young company, and the average age of employees is mid-30s," Chipman said.

"During the pandemic, we've worked on how to adapt to the situation. We're trying to look ahead down the road at how we can better serve our customers — and our employees, too."

**For more information, visit [birchwood.ca](http://birchwood.ca).**



BIRCHWOOD PHOTO

**BIRCHWOOD EMPLOYEES KICK OFF THEIR ANNUAL UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN.**

Birchwood



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**The Birchwood Automotive Group is proud to be recognized as one of Manitoba's Top Employers, as well as one of Canada's Best Employers.**

Our team members are individuals of character, competence, and commitment. They are trustworthy, they work together and they are committed to enhancing our work environment and the experience of our customers. We are extremely proud of each and every one of them. We offer team members a respectful and challenging work environment, an industry leading benefits package and opportunities for advancement.



## BOLD COMMERCE

# BOLD APPROACH PAYS OFF

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

A business with a unique workplace culture lives up to its name as one of Manitoba's top employers.

Bold Commerce offers customizable commerce solutions of all sizes. More than 90,000 brands in upwards of 170 countries trust Bold to power their businesses every day, including well-known companies such as Staples Canada, Vera Bradley and Harry Rosen.

CEO and co-founder Yvan Boisjoli understands the importance of treating employees well. The business currently employs 350 people at its Winnipeg headquarters, plus four others in Calgary and 21 in Texas.

"When we started Bold, we all agreed we wanted to build a company where we would love coming to work. This has been the backbone of our culture," he said. "We wanted our employees to feel connected and allow them to impact the company in every way possible. We want them to think and act like owners, and benefit from these efforts through our employee share ownership plan (ESOP) program."

A developer himself, Boisjoli always dreamed of working for a company like Google.

"As a Winnipegger who loves this city and had no plans of leaving home, we needed to bring that type of company here, and that's what we set out to do. Our story is bigger than that of having fun at work — we are the underdog, and we

have worked to prove that a world-class company can thrive in Winnipeg," he said.

"Although we now have employees across North America, the soul of the company is genuinely Winnipeg, and even the people that have joined our company from afar all share that same spirit."

Bold Commerce invests in its employees through leadership training, mentorship programs and annual education funds. The company also provides flexible start times, paid volunteer time, health and dental benefits with no monthly employee fees, and a health spending account.

Employees enjoy daily catered lunches, complimentary healthy snacks and an on-site gym with free membership. Adding to the upbeat atmosphere, the business boasts air hockey and other games, an employee library, branded swag and local beer on tap.

For Boisjoli, the secret to the company's success stems from the culture they've built at Bold.

"It's more than just perks or treating our employees the right way. It's about challenging them and allowing them to thrive and grow through education, mentorship and career opportunities. Once you build a culture that elevates and pushes people to achieve more than they thought could be possible, work no longer becomes about getting paid," he said.

"Our focus is on how we can help brands thrive in commerce every day. We have high expectations of our employees to achieve these outcomes, which at times is not easy. But, we are all in this together and we need to take care of our most important asset, our people, so that they can best serve our customers."

CHRO Chantal Grindle expressed gratitude for the designation as a Top Employer in the province.

"We're excited, proud and really grateful," she said. "For us to have the best place to work, we've needed to build the best team of people who truly care. This designation would not be possible without our amazing team and their dedication



BOLD COMMERCE PHOTO

**BOLD COMMERCE STAFF VOLUNTEER AT THE CHILDREN'S WISH FOUNDATION TEE OFF 'FORE' A WISH GOLF TOURNAMENT AT BREEZY BEND.**

to our business, our customers and our people." Like Boisjoli, she credits the workplace culture as the main feature that makes Bold stand out as a great employer.

"Some of the building blocks of our culture, which we've outlined in our BUILDERS Code, include innovation, learning and respect. We believe in transparency and accountability, and elevating each other to new heights," Grindle said.

"The growth opportunities at Bold also make us unique. The e-commerce industry is ever-changing, which means we are learning both as individuals and as a business every day."

Even during the pandemic, the company has remained committed to its culture through virtual town hall meetings, remote leadership training and much more.

"Virtual events have been a hit. We have

a work-hard attitude but make sure to set aside time to have fun and celebrate. Some of the virtual events we've hosted so far include pumpkin carving, beer tasting with a favourite local brewer, and trivia nights. It's been a great way to wind down from the day and discover some hidden talents," Grindle said.

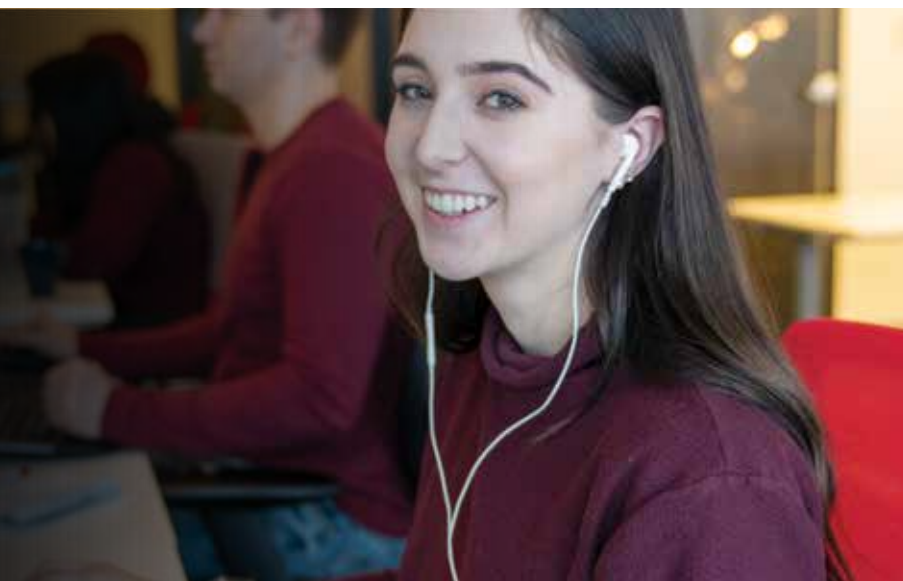
"We've also introduced a couple of apps, which pair a random selection of people from across the company for a watercooler-style chat. We're finding ourselves connecting with people we might not normally cross paths with working in the office. It's great as it pushes us all a bit outside our comfort zone and keeps us social, which we know is really important during these times."

**For more information, visit [boldcommerce.com/careers](https://boldcommerce.com/careers)**



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## BROADVIEW NETWORKS INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

**Strategic planning at Broadview Networks has always included a business continuity plan but the company never dreamed the plan would be tested the way it was.**

Like virtually every other company in town, the Winnipeg-based IT managed services provider was locked down when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, forcing it to send its people home to work.

Luckily, it supports IT services for a host of corporate clients that need to be working, pandemic or no pandemic, so it had seen disasters before. Just, you know, not one that impacted all customers at the same time.

That's when David Reimer, Broadview's director of sales and one of its owners, said the company got out its chequebook.

"Although we already had the technology and processes to enable remote work, we wanted to demonstrate to our staff that we'll support them through this challenging time," Reimer said.

That meant an upgrade to laptops, large screens, cameras, and noise cancelling headsets so its people could excel at their jobs no matter where they were.

"Instead of being concerned and spending less on the staff experience and technology, we spent more. Whether our people were working from the office or home, they had the tools they needed to do their jobs. That was a hugely positive experience at a time when our staff might have been getting down on things," he said.

Broadview also wanted to demonstrate to

its customers that the company is there for them. Instead of measuring staff utilization Broadview used response rate and resolution time as key metrics. "All our effort was focused on how quickly we could respond to and resolve customer issues," said Michael Orloff, the company's president. Although the volume of support calls increased, Broadview was able to achieve its best ever response times.

While its employees ensured clients were still receiving the level of service they had come to expect, the executive team huddled at the office (in a socially-distanced sort of way) to figure out their plan of attack for when the office would reopen.

When people returned to the office after the initial lockdown, the workspace looked very different. The company has 34 employees in a pair of locations, one in River Heights and the other downtown.

The company bought more than enough personal protective equipment (PPE), made it mandatory to wear masks throughout the office, restricted visitors, prevented employees

from venturing out of their areas and implemented temperature testing.

The company's COVID protocols included a Plexiglas partition around every desk so all employees could work without having to worry every time they heard somebody clear their throat or stifle a sneeze.

"We've invested a lot into our staff experience and customer experience. That's a big part of why we're a great place to work," Orloff said.

Indeed, Broadview has just qualified for the first time as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers. It's not like it's new to accolades, however, as it has previously been among Canada's Top Small and Medium Employers of the year.

When things get back to something resembling close to normal after the second lockdown, Broadview's employees will return to their open-concept office, featuring an open area to facilitate collaboration, lots of windows letting in natural light and high ceilings.

They'll also be able to use a gym for the first

time in a while. The company's fitness room features free weights, treadmills, stationary bikes and showers.

"A big part of our commitment to our staff is promoting health and wellness and a healthy lifestyle," Orloff said.

The company also has a unique "CEO." Dexter, an eight-year-old golden retriever, is its Canine Executive Officer (and the Orloff family pet). He looks the part every day as he sports a tie. Seriously.

"He has the run of the place. He usually stays in my office but if he hears anybody coming in, he's usually the first to the door," Orloff said.

The staff doesn't need much encouragement to get involved in the community but the company provides it anyway. Some of their causes include: Adopt-A-Highway, breast cancer research, pet rescues, school breakfast programs, the United Way and heart and stroke awareness.

**For more information, visit [broadviewnetworks.ca](http://broadviewnetworks.ca).**



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## FUSION CREDIT UNION

# OF THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY

**Fusion Credit Union continues to build success on a foundation of three basic, enduring principles — strength of character, strength of commerce and strength of community.**

A full-service financial institution with a staff of 190, Fusion serves more than 32,000 members through 18 branches across communities in Parkland and southwestern Manitoba. Administering assets of more than \$1.06 billion, Fusion has the capacity, the shared commitment and the opportunity to support growth and prosperity, locally and beyond.

"We are very proud of our community roots," says Fusion CEO Darwin Johns. "We have great people who serve great people."

Creating the kind of organization that attracts and retains such great people remains a priority that is already paying dividends as Fusion has, for the second year in a row, earned its place on the 2021 list of Manitoba's Top Employers.

"We position ourselves as a top employer by the benefits we offer, and by cultivating a fun, team-oriented, collaborative work environment," says Johns. "We often attract new employees who feel aligned with our values and the good work we do in our communities."

Fusion employees receive competitive

salaries and a full range of company benefits, including in-branch wellness spaces, an education funding program and other professional development opportunities. The credit union fosters innovation by encouraging staff to develop creative ideas about how the organization can further strengthen its commitment to service excellence.

Johns says Fusion recognizes the increasing role of technology and digital innovations in supporting the banking needs of members, as well as the business needs of its work teams.

"At Fusion, we have numerous business practices in place that enable virtual communication and collaboration across our many branches," he says. "For several years, we have been using online meetings as a means of engaging with one another across our organization. When we started to experience the full impact of COVID-19 earlier this year, we were well-positioned to share information throughout our branches and communities in a very seamless manner."

"We are focussed on every aspect of the employee experience and continually strive

to offer the best possible environment for our teams," says Johns. "We are doing innovative things and we invite people across the organization to participate."

The spirit of participation also transcends the workplace as Fusion has taken steps to solidify its role as a pillar of the community. In 2019, the credit union established its Full Circle Fund to provide support to worthy projects that enhance the quality of life for people of all ages in the communities Fusion serves. The fund has supported community initiatives such as youth activities and legacy projects, not only monetarily, but also through the volunteerism of Fusion employees.

Fusion's community spirit has not been dampened by the challenges of the global pandemic as it continues to address the needs of its communities.

"We are focused on our members and communities, and we have several ongoing initiatives that generate opportunity for local growth and development," says Johns. "Earlier this year, we announced total patronage returns to our members of over \$2.2 million. We've paid patronage returns to our members every year for the

past 20 years.

"In a time when so many people are facing uncertainty, the cash payouts are a timely support to our members who have helped Fusion to flourish over the years."

Johns says Fusion also stepped up to support local businesses struggling through these uniquely trying times. Through its Invest for Good campaign, the credit union purchased \$18,100 worth of gift cards from 79 small businesses in their communities.

Through ongoing dedication to its vision, mission and values, Fusion has created an organization that brings out the best in its employees, as well as the communities where they live, work and play.

"We have always believed that our members deserve the very best, and so do our Fusion team members who serve as our ambassadors to our valued communities," says Johns. "Great people drive great results."

**For more information about career opportunities with Fusion Credit Union, visit [fusioncu.com](https://fusioncu.com).**



FUSION CREDIT UNION PHOTO

FUSION CREDIT UNION STAFF TAKE PART IN JEANS DAY FOR CHARITY.

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PHOTOS BY BRADLEY GERBRANDT

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF THE PANDEMIC, JOHNSTON GROUP HAS BEEN ABLE TO KEEP EVERYONE EMPLOYED.

JOHNSTON GROUP INC.

## CREATIVE COLLABORATION

BY JUDY OWEN

Even though they're working apart, employees of Johnston Group Inc. are finding creative ways to come together for some virtual socializing and teamwork.

Most of the company's 285 employees were shifted to work at home in April instead of at the insurance and group benefits provider's Winnipeg headquarters because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but employee-led committees came up with creative ways to continue their Work Life Wonderful wellness programs.

An online talk show draws appreciative audiences, fitness classes are held virtually instead of at the office's gym and employees socialize playing digital bingo, visiting virtual escape rooms or having online coffee dates.

Fundraising for community organizations such as the United Way has been

maintained, and even expanded.

"As you can imagine, it's not easy when you're trying to run things virtually, but these committees have really done an outstanding job," said Will Johnston of Johnston Group.

"They worked very hard to make sure these activities didn't disappear and people could still interact with them."

Johnston's father, David, founded the company in 1983. It provides benefit services to more than 30,000 businesses and their employees across Canada.

When the pandemic got a foothold in Manitoba, the company sent all but about 15 of its employees home with their desktop computers and then turned to its IT department to ensure it was almost business as usual.

"Our tech support team was fantastic in managing the whole piece," Will Johnston said. "They were the heroes of that moment."

"Making sure everyone could get out was our first priority for our employees'

safety, and then to do it in a way that we still had the capacity to serve our clients."

The employees remaining in the 60,000-square-foot home office follow all health protocols and connect via video calls instead of in-person meetings. A few employees also work from home in cities across Canada.

Employees even expanded their committees this year to six "pillars" from four, rebranding them as Work Life Wonderful wellness programs that key on a holistic approach. They are: Eat, Sleep and Move (physical); Personal and Professional Development (mental); Purpose and Contribution (spiritual); Green Team (environmental); Mission in Positive (emotional); and Social Committee.

Johnston said one of the popular initiatives was the twice-weekly *JG Coffee with Friends* show on "JG TV" led by charismatic employees Jeff Reyes and Abraham Tassia-Santos. They chat with guests from management giving updates or committee members talking about what they're working on.

"It was really just, 'Everybody's out of the building, how do we keep people connected?'" Johnston said. "Kind of a virtual lunch room type of thing."

A third of the company has watched the show live for many of the episodes, he said.

"And we're even seeing people that in the past may not have participated regularly in these types of activities are participating a lot more. It speaks to that connection and that we want to see our team members."

The Purpose and Contribution committee oversees fundraising.

Johnston Group president Dave Angus is chairing the United Way campaign this year, which the company has long supported, along with other agencies and organizations.

"(Our committee) put together a phenomenal template for a virtual United Way workplace campaign this year,"

Johnston said. "In fact, I think a few other organizations said, 'Can you send me what you guys did?'"

"They organized virtual agency tours and hosted some of the events through Zoom meetings, and even ran a live auction with all proceeds going to United Way. It was really an outstanding amount of effort and they did a fantastic job."

Despite challenging times, he said Johnston Group was able to keep everyone employed. Employees will also receive their annual bonuses.

This year, Johnston Group wanted to increase grassroots giving to the United Way by creating a match in honour of Manitoba's 150th birthday called the 150 Challenge. Johnston Group matches new donations of \$150. Also, to help increase contributions at the Major Donor level, Johnston Group is matching every individual who has previously donated at the \$5,000 level and increases their donation to the \$7,500 level.

Along with being named one of Manitoba's Top Employers for 2021, Johnston Group was also recognized as one of Canada's Top Small and Medium Employers for 2020.

For more information, visit [johnstongroup.ca](http://johnstongroup.ca).



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# MANITOBA BLUE CROSS SUPPORTING THE WHOLE EMPLOYEE

BY TODD LEWYS

There’s something to be said about being recognized as one of Manitoba’s Top Employers for the 11th time in 15 years. And one key ingredient may be that Manitoba Blue Cross doesn’t take a one-size-fits-all approach to meeting their employees’ needs.

“We do our best to create an environment where an employee feels they can bring their whole self to work,” says Brenda Slikker, Chief Operating Officer at Manitoba Blue Cross. “Life is complex, especially as we navigate through the unknowns of the pandemic, and personal stressors don’t take a vacation while we’re at work. That’s why we feel it’s essential to provide benefits and resources that care for the whole employee and help foster an overall sense of well-being.”

This is evident in the company’s offerings. In addition to a competitive salary, company-matched pension plan and three weeks of vacation time after the first year, employees have access to a wide range of health and wellness supports.

This includes a robust health benefits package and coverage through the company’s onsite employee assistance program, which provides counselling,

work-life and personal wellness services, psychiatric consultation and addictions management support.

“Employees — when pandemic restrictions aren’t in force — also have access to a fully-equipped fitness centre that’s available free of charge to them and their families,” says Wendy Unger, Director of Corporate Services. “They also receive ergonomic assessments to ensure their workspace meets their physical needs and have access to quiet rooms for rest and restoration.”

The workplace also has an employee lounge complete with recreational activities like foosball and a pool table. It includes a kitchen where employees can prepare hot lunches and a self-serve Blue Café that provides nutritious, affordable meal options for purchase 24 hours a day.

Manitoba Blue Cross also strives to create an environment where employees feel connected.

“We recognize that social connection and a sense of community are essential components to overall well-being,” says Unger. “We put on company-wide events like barbecues and lunches to show appreciation to our staff while bringing everyone together. Contests, potlucks and team-building activities are also frequent occurrences and an opportunity for our employees to step away from their desks and engage with one another.”

Connecting is more important than ever during the pandemic, she adds.

“While social connection looks different during the pandemic, we consider it more important than ever. Physical events have transitioned to virtual ones, such as fun at-home challenges, learning activities and initiatives that bring our employees together in a new way. A perfect example is our United Way campaign, one of the many ways our employees support and connect with our community. Even though it was virtual, we still had 93 per cent

participation.”

When it comes to corporate culture, the Manitoba Blue Cross tagline carries a lot of weight.

“Our ongoing priority is to ensure we live and breathe the Colour of Caring and that it starts within,” says Slikker. “A crucial component of this is to foster a respectful and inclusive workplace, which is why we have introduced an equity, diversity and inclusion policy at Manitoba Blue Cross, and established an employee-driven diversity committee.”

It’s also about empowering employees, she adds.

“We believe that each employee brings something meaningful to our organization and that creating a learning and development culture is essential to an engaged, satisfied and productive team.”

To that end, Manitoba Blue Cross has established a dedicated learning and development team which provides the opportunity to participate in a leadership and career development program, and facilitates in-house training, workshops and continuing education opportunities.

Manitoba Blue Cross also embraces employee feedback and, in addition to inviting open dialogue, conducts annual engagement surveys to better understand how best to meet employees’ ever-evolving needs. They also invite employees to bring forward new ideas and have facilitated innovation labs with representation from across the company.

“We recognize that each of our employees is unique in what they need, what they bring to the organization and where they place value,” says Slikker. “That is why we strive to support the whole employee and invest in their overall well-being.”

For more information, visit [mb.bluecross.ca](http://mb.bluecross.ca).



MANITOBA BLUE CROSS PHOTO

MANITOBA BLUE CROSS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BRENDA SLIKKER (SECOND FROM LEFT) PRESENTS A DONATION TO WINNIPEG HARVEST CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KEREN TAYLOR-HUGHES (LEFT).

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## MANITOBA PUBLIC INSURANCE

# ENHANCING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Manitoba Public Insurance has been part of the community for almost 50 years. During that time, the public auto insurer has grown with our province, to the point that there are now about 1.2 million Autopac policies in force at any given time.

Most Manitobans, it's safe to say, are MPI customers. And the organization is determined to improve the experience of those customers and better meet their auto insurance, vehicle registration and driver licensing needs.

"We're shifting our culture to become more customer-centric. Improving the customer experience is a perfect fit with our corporate values: to do what's right, to invest in people, to provide value, and to strive for excellence," says Satvir Jatana, MPI Vice-President, Employee and Community Engagement and Chief Human Resources Officer.

To this end, MPI is currently undertaking the biggest digital transformation in its history, which involves replacing outdated systems with the goal of streamlining processes, improving customer convenience and increasing online service options.

To complement this long-term transformation, MPI is also undertaking a deep look at the overall experience of customers. This has led to a collaborative effort to increase the customer focus across the MPI

brand and culture. The effort is summed up in a simple internal mantra: *Do better. Together. For customers.*

The customer experience initiative is based on a recognition that every single interaction a customer has with MPI influences their perception of the corporation — so a great customer experience creates a positive perception and an understanding of the value that MPI provides.

A key internal component of this effort is a year-long anthology series, called *The Twelve Stories of Customer Experience*. Each month, a new story is unveiled to staff, examining a common interaction from the customer's point of view. Topics range from customers who need to book a driving test to customers who have been severely injured in a collision and need help accessing rehabilitation resources.

"The series also serves to highlight what an incredibly diverse range of services and employment opportunities we offer," Jatana says.

No matter the topic, the customer is

always the hero of the story, and staff are the trusted guide who help the hero succeed. Stories are told through a multimedia approach that features an animated video from the customer's point of view. The videos are created entirely in-house, using a collaborative approach that includes staff from the featured business area, as well as from design, research and communication departments. The animations are backed up with a host of supplemental materials that examine the interaction and dive into research and metrics around the topic and offer suggested service improvements.

The end goal is to benefit customers, but Jatana points out that it is the employee experience that is helping MPI achieve its customer experience goals.

"They are two sides of the same coin. The way we care for our people is the way they will care for our customers and each other," Jatana says.

One of the many reasons MPI is returning as a Manitoba Top Employer is that all employees are provided the tools and resources they need to succeed. MPI

is a large company offering a wide range of career opportunities, including roles in frontline service, claims, IT, finance and much more. In addition to ongoing efforts like *The Twelve Stories*, training opportunities abound at all levels and there is continuous development of leadership potential.

In addition to abundant opportunities and encouragement for growth, employees receive competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits, and a clear focus on wellness and work/life balance. The majority of employee roles are based in Winnipeg, but opportunities are available at locations across the province, from Brandon to Steinbach to Thompson and many points between.

MPI believes in agility — flexible work options have been enhanced during the ongoing pandemic to ensure both operational continuity and employee safety. MPI leapt into action last spring to enable most staff to work from home and to continually ensure measures are in place for the safety of frontline staff who assist customers in-person.

"We are committed to investing in people," Jatana says. "When we provide for our employees, they are equipped to provide for our customers and enhance the customer experience."

**For more information, visit [mpi.mb.ca](https://mpi.mb.ca).**

# Drive your career forward.







PHOTOS BY DARCY FINLEY

## MISERICORDIA HEALTH CENTRE

# BUILDING ON A LONG-STANDING LEGACY

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

With more than 120 years in the community, Misericordia Health Centre strives to be the future of care for Manitobans.



MISERICORDIA HEALTH CENTRE PRESIDENT AND CEO CAROLINE DeKEYSER.

and Home Care Community IV programs among others.

Misericordia is also home to Health Links – Info Santé and offers a continuum of long-term care, from Misericordia Place Personal Care Home to Transitional Care Units to PRIME — a health centre for seniors.

The faith-based health centre provides acute care for Manitobans through the provincial Eye Care Centre of Excellence and provincial Sleep Disorder Centre as well as providing oral health pediatric dental

President and CEO Caroline DeKeyster expressed deep pride in the Winnipeg-based health centre's Mission of providing care specializing in healthy aging. Founded in 1898 by the Sisters of Misericordia, the organization has been named one of Manitoba's Top Employers — and with good reason.

"I am seriously proud of how Misericordia works and leaves a legacy of its founding Sisters — and the motto they lived by, which is compassion of the heart for those in need," she said.

"We work with value-based care and we have stayed true to that. There have been a lot of changes over the years, but what has not changed are the fundamentals based on caring, respect and trust. This intentionality around value-based care translates into how we deliver in a way that makes a difference."

This focus on values provides a

solid foundation that's built right into Misericordia Health Centre's strategic plan. At the same time, these values are reflected in everything from workplace celebrations to employees' everyday interactions with patients.

"We do things with depth and sincerity so that we can look at the whole person. As a result, we provide patient-centred care and individual care in the fullest way that we can," DeKeyster said.

"When you build values into your tools, it translates from the theory right down to the practical. If we're mentoring new people or working with our team, we know we're on track if we use our values to make our decisions in conscious ways. We're doing our utmost to have respect for every person.

"There's a lot of attention given to staff. The sisters have left a history with leadership through hospitality, and we continue with their legacy of hospitality in our celebrations of accomplishments," DeKeyster said.

"We support our staff with educational opportunities through scholarships or paid education leaves. We also have supports for staff who find themselves in crisis, which can make a really big difference at a critical point."

Looking to the future, Misericordia Health Centre continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of the community. For example, Health Links – Info Santé is at the heart of the pandemic response, answering COVID-19 questions and triaging health concerns. Health Links – Info Santé was the first bilingual phone-based nursing triage system in Canada when it launched in 1994.

"Misericordia is always ready to embrace change through our programming. Our Eye Care Centre of Excellence has 40,000

patients that come through eye clinics each year," DeKeyster said, "with more than 13,000 eye surgeries performed annually, including innovations with non-sedation cataract surgeries." Misericordia's Eye Care Centre is the largest comprehensive surgical and treatment program of its kind in Western Canada.

"We also spearhead another provincial program for sleep disorders," DeKeyster added. "We're doing almost 3,000 sleep studies here at Misericordia each year and we're conducting another 2,000 home studies each year.

"Our Foundation also pivots to meet Misericordia's needs. This year's 25th Anniversary Angel Squad campaign, which is underway right now, is focused on ensuring the holiday season is merry and bright for our long-term care residents. With COVID-19 visitor restrictions in place, we have critical needs to help prevent social isolation such as personalized therapeutic activity kits designed to help those living with dementia." Misericordia's newest addition to its long-term care campus will bolster the assisted living options in the community.

"We're building a 97-unit affordable assisted living seniors' centre. Shovels are in the ground now and it will be up in two years' time," she said.

"We've got quite a demand already for it in terms of a wait list. It's a way of rounding out that campus of care for those older adults in the community while also providing what's lacking in the West Broadway and Wolseley area. We try to make sure we're relevant and meeting the needs of the population."

**For more information, visit [misericordia.mb.ca](https://www.misericordia.mb.ca).**



### Vision

Misericordia Health Centre is a leader in healthy aging through compassion, innovation and excellence.

### Mission

Misericordia Health Centre is a leading provider of specialized and long-term care programs designed to meet the needs of the aging population in accordance with the Catholic tradition of ethical and spiritual values through the legacy of the Misericordia Sisters.

We serve Manitobans through programs unique to Misericordia: Eye Care Centre of Excellence, Health Links – Info Santé/Provincial Health Contact Centre and Sleep Disorder Centre.

### Values

**Caring • Respect • Trust**

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PAYWORKS INC.

## PRIDE IN WORKPLACE PAYS OFF

BY JIM BENDER

**It is a simple mantra that has paid dividends for Payworks.**

"We started a project a few years ago to define what our focus was and what makes our employees proud to work at Payworks, and what it is that gets them out of bed each morning," says Nicole Stewart, Payworks vice-president of human resources. "The statement was 'Doing Right by People,' which gave our employees a sense of pride."

That led to a number of employee-involved programs and that kind of regard for its people led to Payworks being named one of Manitoba's Top Employers for 2021.

"We had the initial reaction of pure excitement," Stewart said. "It's a thrill for our staff to see Payworks recognized as an exceptional place to work and we want to shout it from the rooftops."

According to its website, Payworks is "a leading expert in the field of total workforce management solutions, providing cloud-based Payroll, Human Resources, Employee Time and Absence Management to businesses across Canada." Winnipeg is the head office, which oversees 349 employees at ten branches all across the nation.

The "Doing Right by People" purpose

statement extends throughout the company, and includes a commitment to corporate social responsibility that Payworks has called Pay It Forward.

"Our purpose means different things to different people," Stewart said. "It means doing right by our clients, by our support teams and doing right by our partners. One of the big ones for us is the community. Staff loves the chance to pay it forward to charities. Our national partners include the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Canada, Tim Hortons Foundation Camps, United Way and this year in honour of our 20th anniversary, we made significant contributions to several local organizations including the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre."

"But there are a number of other charities that mean something specifically to our people. Each employee receives two paid days off a year to go out and spend time with charities of their choice."

For an added bonus, Payworks matches employees' donations to charities, up to \$400 each per annum.

Furthermore, Payworks provides a competitive employee benefits package that includes free access to a TelaDoc Health program, which offers virtual health-care services to employees. The company also offers a \$250 wellness benefit to go towards activities that facilitate an active lifestyle, such as sports registration fees, dance classes and so on.

Because Payworks prioritizes its people and its workplace culture, engaging employees by offering referral bonuses of \$1,000 each to any employee who successfully refers new recruits to the company was a natural fit when developing a recruitment strategy.

"A few years ago, one of my long-term goals was to get Payworks to a place where we don't need to formally



PAYWORKS PHOTO

**PAYWORKS STAFF MEMBERS WITH THE WINNIPEG SIGN AT THE FORKS.**

**“It’s a thrill for our staff to see Payworks recognized as an exceptional place to work and we want to shout it from the rooftops.”**

— NICOLE STEWART, PAYWORKS VICE-PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

recruit new employees any more. We want to be thought of as an exceptional workplace where people want to come to work," Stewart said. "Last year, about 25 per cent of our new hires were filled by internal referrals."

However, that doesn't mean there was a lot of turnover in the local staff of about 250 employees.

"We do a lot of hiring because we service our clients on a one-to-one basis and our sales staff is fantastic in getting more clients," Stewart said. "So, we need more people to help us as we continue to grow."

The company hires people experienced in customer service, sales, accounting, analysis and technology.

Payworks is also a 2020 winner of Canada's Best Managed Companies

Platinum Club designation. It was the eighth straight year it was named one of the Best Managed organizations.

The criteria for becoming a member of the Best Managed program includes excellence in Canadian-owned and managed companies with revenues over \$25 million; the calibre of management abilities and practices; overall business performance and sustained growth; and financial performance.

"We made Platinum again this year, which is something that we're very proud of," Stewart said. "I'm very proud of our organization and what our teams have built up."

**For more information, visit [payworks.ca](http://payworks.ca).**



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This is why we've created a workplace where experiences can be shared and employees are encouraged to pay our successes forward in their communities, in their own way.

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**Payworks**





PHOTOS BY DARCY FINLEY

RED RIVER CO-OP OPERATES ON THE VALUES OF INTEGRITY, TEAMWORK AND RESPECT.

## RED RIVER CO-OP

# THRIVING WITH A LOCAL VISION

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

**Red River Co-op is built on the vision of being truly local — and a promise to stay that way.**

More than 312,000 members in Winnipeg and neighbouring communities wholly own Red River Co-op, which operates on the values of integrity, teamwork and respect.

"We are owned by our members who live in our trading areas, we hire locally, and we support local growers and producers by partnering with them to sell their product and help grow their business," said CEO Doug Wiebe.

"In 2019, Red River Co-op did over \$10

million in sales of locally made product, putting massive dollars into the pockets of Manitoba farmers and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, our profits don't line the pockets of rich shareholders in faraway places; they are returned to our local members. Last year, we distributed \$37.8 million in equity and cash to our membership."

Not only do profits stay local, Red River Co-op provides further support through

its community investment program, which awarded more than \$180,000 in donations to charities and non-profits in 2019. The co-operative runs additional annual programs to further support the community, including Fuel Good Day which saw a \$50,000 donation go to the Bear Clan this fall, and Community Spaces where the Selkirk Curling Rink was awarded with \$70,000 for their roof renovation project.

The retail co-operative operates 35 full-service gas bar locations with convenience stores, and many with car washes.

"We are proud to have exceptional customer service at the core of everything we do and are one of the few fuel companies left that still employ people to pump your gas and wash your windows," Wiebe said. "We also provide bulk fuel delivery to commercial and farm accounts, and operate five commercial cardlocks."



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**Red River**



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“As a co-operative, we believe strongly in the principle of co-operation. It’s ingrained into everything we do. We operate in two highly competitive, customer-focused industries. If you don’t have happy employees at every level, it’s impossible to engage with our customers, and ultimately to meet their needs.”

- MURRAY DEHN,  
VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

In July 2019, the co-operative also opened its seventh food store, located in Gimli.

“We are currently in the process of building two additional food stores in Winnipeg and look forward to serving new communities and expanding our employee family into those neighbourhoods,” Wiebe said. “Our St. Norbert store should be opening sometime around Christmas, and our new build in Seasons of Tuxedo, near the Outlet Collection Winnipeg mall is scheduled to open next summer.”

The pandemic has been challenging with decreased business at gas bars combined with increased business at food stores.

“Where we can, we have shifted the stocking of our stores to evening hours in an effort to reduce possible interactions and enhance social distancing for customers shopping at our stores,” Wiebe said.

Other safety measures include increased cleaning and sanitizing, more personal protective equipment and barriers, restricted customer volume in stores, a seniors’ hour shopping, and a new “Click & Collect” e-commerce program for curbside pickup.

Murray Dehn, Vice-President, Human Resources, expressed pride in Red River Co-op’s recognition as a Top Employer.

“This is the first time we have been officially designated as one of Manitoba’s top employers,” he said. “However, it confirms what we have long believed — that Red River Co-op is an awesome place to work.”

Although its revenues make Red River

Co-op stand out as a large organization, its values reflect the fact it remains rooted as a local business.

“Our employees have access to, and form personal relationships with, our management team at all levels. Our CEO is a presence in all our locations, not just when conducting official business but as a shopper as well, and he enjoys conversing with and listening to our frontline staff. He is recognized by most of our employees and they address him on a first-name basis,” Dehn said.

“We know our employees on a personal level and genuinely care about them as individuals, which helps us to make the right business decisions with their needs in mind. We provide our employees with opportunities to advance, not only within our own Co-op but also through other Co-ops across Western Canada. We provide employees with great careers and a grow from within culture — you can literally start in a frontline position with our Co-op and retire in a senior management role.”

Employee perks include health, dental and pension benefits, training and workshops, competitive wages, tuition reimbursement, and an employee and family assistance program. Other initiatives include employee purchase rebates, service milestone recognition, volunteer and team-building activities, flexible schedules and work-from-home opportunities where possible.

“As a co-operative, we believe strongly in the principle of co-operation. It’s ingrained into everything we do. We operate in two highly competitive, customer-focused industries. If you

don’t have happy employees at every level, it’s impossible to engage with our customers, and ultimately to meet their needs,” Dehn said. “We will not rest on our laurels. To elevate our employee experience, we are always coming up with imaginative ways to retain and impress our talent and we are continually on the hunt for top talent in the industries we serve. Our benefits are customized to the needs of each business unit. We try to be as responsive to our employees’ needs as we can.”

**For more information,  
visit [redriverco-op.crs](http://redriverco-op.crs).**





ROQUETTE CANADA

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

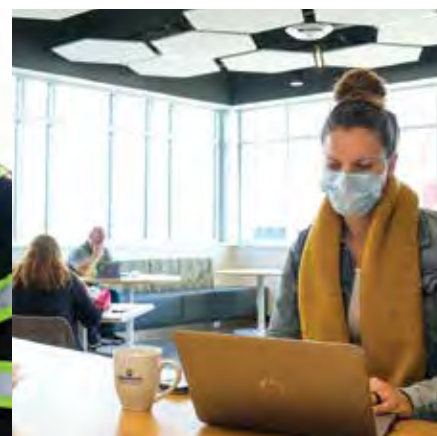
BY TODD LEWYS

With operations in more than 100 countries worldwide that employ 8,670 people, Roquette — a global leader in plant-based ingredients — has written quite the success story over the past 87 years.



DARCY FINLEY PHOTO

TRISH CLARK, ROQUETTE CANADA'S HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES.



ROQUETTE CANADA PHOTOS

STAFF MEMBERS AT ROQUETTE'S STATE-OF-THE-ART PEA PROTEIN PROCESSING PLANT IN PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE.

Now that the company is bringing a state-of-the-art pea protein processing plant in Portage la Prairie, the management team at Roquette Canada is continuing the practice of keeping lines of communication with employees open at all times, says Trish Clark, Roquette Canada's head of human resources.

"Constant communication is so important," she says. "Our management team is transparent with our employees, staying in regular contact with initiatives such as town hall meetings. Doing that builds trust and openness."

Further to that, adds Clark, the work environment at Roquette Canada — the plant is the largest of its kind in the world, and will process 125,000 metric tonnes of yellow peas annually — has been designed to promote a barrier-free relationship between management and employees.

"We actually have an open work environment where leaders are right in the same space with their teams — there are no doors separating management and employees here," says Clark. "When you walk in, you could see our CEO talking to someone in our IT department. Anyone can ask a question of our CEO, from a millwright on up."

That open, collaborative approach begins the moment a new employee checks in for work.

Right off the hop, they get a backpack, information package, company phone and coffee mug or drinking bottle with their name on it.

"That helps them get ready for their first day at work," she says. "Each new em-

ployee undergoes a one-week orientation that includes a buddy to ask questions of and get training from. We want them to feel welcome, so they immediately feel like they're part of the team. Our CEO meets with all leaders and new employees right away to make sure a connection is made right at the beginning."

Clark notes that employees get even more support in the form of comprehensive training.

"We want people to be comfortable and knowledgeable in their roles, so they're empowered by leaders to access tools such as job-specific training and company programs that are provided in blended and online formats," Clark says. "We don't have boundaries in gaining knowledge or asking questions."

At the same time, a generous benefits package ensures that each employee — there are currently 90 at the plant, with another 30 to be hired in the not-too-distant future — feels taken care of and appreciated.

"Not only do we support a healthy lifestyle with an on-site gym and healthy snacks, but we also give each employee a health spending account of \$1,200," she says. "The company also pays for the whole benefit package, which covers the well-being of each family with comprehensive services all the way around."

Clark says Roquette Canada's management team is genuinely committed to coming up with innovative workplace initiatives and programs.

"The idea is to create a workplace cul-

ture that's consistently open and supportive and that empowers employees. Our management team wants people to feel those things every day."

That support shows up in small, everyday gestures, she adds.

"If an employee doesn't seem to be happy, a leader will approach them and ask them how they're doing," says Clark. "They also take the time to get to know the names of family members, or just to say good morning when an employee arrives at work. Those are small, but important details."

It's all those little details that translate into a great workplace.

As it's turned out, Roquette Canada's reputation is sterling.

"People just want to come and work here," she says. "We don't advertise a ton, but people just apply online. We have no problem attracting skilled trades; they just want to be part of what we do, even during the pandemic, when we've hired a new work force."

As Roquette Canada moves forward during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, they will continue to do what they've always done: put their employees first.

"We genuinely care about our staff and will do whatever we have to do to keep them safe, as safety is in our culture and part of our practice," Clark says. "Our priority is our employees. We are one at Roquette Canada."

**For more information, visit [roquette.com](http://roquette.com).**



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ST.AMANT

## ST.AMANT'S INVESTMENTS IN STAFF PAY OFF DURING PANDEMIC

Just over seven months ago, St.Amant began adapting to the new reality of facing a pandemic in Manitoba. As new announcements and protocols happened every day, their staff rose to the challenge and pivoted to ensure the best service possible. The threat of the virus, the closing of schools and some programming, all sprung up within days and affected people supported and their families, volunteers, and staff.

This is the 10th year that St.Amant is being recognized as one of Manitoba's Top Employers, and its investments in people continue to pay off as the pandemic carries on. The culture of collaboration, hospitality, excellence, and respect that has been nurtured across the organization has allowed them to navigate the challenges hurled at them this year. With over 2,000 people supported by St.Amant, staff stepped up to make sure their needs were still met with the new safety measures.

"One of the things that I'm especially proud of St.Amant for, is that staff value people's health and safety. But we also want to make sure the people supported have fun. That they have meaningful connections with friends and family. And that isn't easy, that takes a lot of hard work," said John Leggat, president and chief executive officer.

St.Amant programs instituted new protocols and hundreds of non-direct care

staff immediately started working from home, connecting with their teams over video conferencing. Reliable technology solutions are provided by St.Amant's IT services team to employees across the province.

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 Rd. in St. Vital. To support those across the province dealing with the challenges of the pandemic, staff in their clinical services team established a COVID-19 wellness line for the St.Amant community to call. Teams are encouraged to be more innovative during the pandemic.

"Staff were so creative, they really focused on the people we support, coming up with all kinds of unique and creative ways in keeping people busy," said Shirley Labossière, chief operating officer and chief financial officer.



ST.AMANT PHOTO

MINDFULNESS IS NOW A CORE COMPETENCY FOR ALL STAFF AT ST.AMANT.

As a large, multi-faceted resource for Manitobans with developmental disabilities and autism, the organization now employs over 2,000 staff. St.Amant was once known as a place where people with disabilities would spend most of their lives. Today, the River Road location is a place where people come to receive short-term health and stabilization services, before they return to their homes.

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 in approximately 80 homes.

St.Amant has four community-based early-learning autism sites with an additional classroom expected to open soon. The pandemic has not stopped the organization working with children and families in nearly 50 First Nations communities across Manitoba through Jordan's Principle. The various members of the team use their skills and passions and provide support through videos and mail.

The organization is also fortunate to have an occupational health services team to screen staff and answer questions they may have regarding the pandemic. They

dispel myths that cause anxiety and offer reassurance while reminding everyone to practise the fundamentals.

A consistent pillar of St.Amant is a strong focus on personalized and ongoing professional development, with continuous opportunities for staff to enjoy long-term, rewarding career growth. The team that sustains St.Amant's culture of learning now works from home and has used this time to expand the capacity of the online learning system that develops 2,000 staff. Training at St.Amant covers a multitude of topics, from safety and health, to accessibility and human rights, to critical incident stress management.

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.

**To explore St.Amant, check out their Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and browse all the exciting career opportunities at [stamant.ca](http://stamant.ca).**



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ST. JOHN'S-RAVENS COURT

**FOSTERING  
EXCELLENCE  
WITHIN A  
SUPPORTIVE  
COMMUNITY**

This is the 13th year running that St. John's-Ravenscourt (SJR) has been awarded a place as one of Manitoba's Top Employers — an achievement which recognizes the strength of the school's community and workplace, made up of almost 175 teaching faculty and administrative staff.

This year also marks SJR's bi-centennial, celebrating 200 years since it was originally founded in 1820 and making it the oldest school in western Canada and the second-oldest independent school in the country. This impressive milestone has been an opportunity for the school to reflect on two centuries of history, tradition and experience as part of the fabric of the Winnipeg community as they continue to embrace their four key pillars of academic excellence, creative expression, active

healthy living and social responsibility.

SJR is a co-educational university prep school which welcomes approximately 840 students from both the local community as well as boarding students from Canada and around the world. With almost 100 per cent university entrance and an impressive record of scholarships and awards, SJR provides not only a first-rate education for its students, but also an exceptional workplace for its teachers and staff. As well as access to staff lounges and a full-service cafeteria, new administrative employees enjoy three weeks of annual paid vacation (teachers receive 12 weeks each year). All employees also receive two paid personal days and paid days off between Christmas and New Year's Day.

It is its supportive and welcoming community (encompassing a network of more than 8,000 alumni, students and past and current staff) which makes SJR stand out as an employer beyond the competitive salaries and benefits packages. They have successfully created an atmosphere of mutual support and respect, welcoming new

employees and making them feel a part of the SJR 'family.'

With an emphasis on fostering excellence in both students and staff, SJR has developed a workplace that attracts diverse and talented employees: SJR teachers have been recognized with awards on both a provincial and national level. Just last year, two Senior School teachers received awards from the Governor General in recognition of their work leading a student-authored book about the history and legacy of colonialism and its impact on Indigenous people. Working at the school means being part of an organization which offers an array of opportunities for continued professional development for staff, including on-campus mentoring programs and in-house training, as well as a subsidy of up to \$2,500 in tuition fees for staff taking work-related courses.

SJR's focus on supporting their staff beyond the workplace is also significant. The school offers a generous maternity leave top-up: up to 90 per cent of salary for 17 weeks, followed by parental leave top-up

for new mothers of up to 90 per cent of their salary for an additional 10 weeks. New fathers and adoptive parents are also eligible for a top-up of 90 per cent of their salary for 10 weeks. Parental leaves may be extended into unpaid leaves of absence. In addition, SJR offers a defined-benefit pension plan and retirement planning assistance, as well as phased-in work options for those nearing retirement from their careers at the school.

Also of note at SJR is the work environment itself: a beautiful 23-acre campus nestled on the banks of the Red River and surrounded by the Wildwood Park community. With recent renovations and upgrades including a state-of-the-art fitness centre, SJR is proud to offer some of the finest facilities for its staff to teach and work in. Being part of the SJR community means embracing all that it has to offer, from participation in charitable causes and school-wide events, to being a part of the school's goal to foster excellence not only in their students and graduates, but also in the faculty and staff that they employ.





# TURN LEARNERS INTO LEADERS

[sjr.mb.ca](http://sjr.mb.ca)



St. John's-Ravenscourt School



TRUE NORTH SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT

TRUE NORTH VALUES HOLD STRONGER THAN EVER DURING PANDEMIC

As is the case for many local organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the resiliency of True North Sports + Entertainment as a company, and of its employees, both personally and professionally.

While the ebb and flow of COVID-19 restrictions has allowed True North to resume protocol-modified operations at its five Jets Gear retail outlets and Bell MTS Iceplex; welcome cohort-managed summer campers to the True North Youth Foundation's Camp Manitou; and briefly resume NHL hockey in August in the play-off "bubble", nearly all aspects of True North's business and service offerings have been at a standstill since March 12. Being in the business of hosting large gatherings at Bell MTS Place and the Burton Cummings Theatre, True North fully anticipates being one of the last businesses to fully resume operations.

Amid the challenges and uncertainties, the long-standing and deep-rooted organizational values that True North has been committed to during times of success and growth — Team, Trust and Respect, Do the Right Thing, and Continuous Improvement — have continued to guide the organization during the pandemic, and led to the development of new human resource principles to help navigate an off-season like no other.

True North's priority throughout the pandemic has been to keep its team intact and strong and to provide care to employees with consistency. Ownership, leadership and all employees have expressed a collective trust to engage in work and activities that support one another and a stronger return to business, and an understanding that as a team/family, True North shares in the wins and good times and also shares in the losses and times of adversity.

Whether by pivoting, innovating, pitching in to other areas of the business or preparing for resumption and remaining ready to safely reopen the doors of Bell MTS Place and the Burton Cummings Theatre, True North employees have continued to exemplify True North's values.

"Not dissimilar to others, this has been a challenging time filled with uncertainty for the organization and our employees, as we look for information and indicators from health authorities, the NHL and AHL, the touring industry, suppliers, vendors and one another," said True North President & Chief Operating Officer John Olfert. "Our response to the uncertainty has been communication. We share what we know, admit to not having all the answers on issues where our line of sight remains blurry, and encourage our True North team to stay in conversation with one another as we support and care for each other and the community we serve."

True North's efforts to make communication a priority started with daily updates to its entire workforce to keep the team informed and connected throughout the first several months of the pandemic. A key message throughout has been the importance of a healthy and safe workplace. Underlining this commitment was the creation of the "Care, People, Resumption" committee to continuously review protocols and guide a safe return to physical office and working spaces. When the time comes for resumption of events at Bell MTS Place and the Burton Cummings Theatre, these same safety principles and processes will be in place to ensure a safe in-venue working environment for True North's casual and part-time workforce as well.

As important as timely information sharing has been two-way communication and the ability to maintain employee interaction — not only for business matters but for relationships and workplace culture.

"With the pandemic eliminating many of our traditional gatherings and celebratory events, it was important to find new ways to keep everyone connected and engaged," said Dawn Haus, Vice President of Human Resources. "This meant using our new virtual tools to switch to digital formats to host our information sharing 'Synergy Sessions' and 'All Hands' meetings and taking advantage of new opportunities to team-build like through our virtual social clubs."

One of the ways in which True North team-builds is through community service. Whether through making mental wellness resources and hockey-themed kids' activities available online, participating in True North's hamper initiative, spending a day laying sod at Camp Manitou, or providing at-home fitness and training videos to the community, teams continued to bond in giving back.

Teams are not just giving back to the community; they are also giving back to each other and to the organization. Throughout the pandemic, employees have embraced opportunities to take on redeployment projects, lend their skills to other areas of the organization and provide support in new ways. As well as building on their sense of team and in some cases building new skills, the ability to lend a hand outside key areas of expertise has created a new awareness and understanding of others' roles and of other areas of True North's business.

The business realities of the pandemic have

required some practical considerations including limiting expenditures to essential spending, deferring capital projects, not filling vacancies left open by employees who have left, suspending certain benefits and implementing a reduced work week program. These measures, coupled with a commitment from ownership, have allowed True North to avoid layoffs due to the pandemic.

"This unique break in our seasonal cycle has afforded the opportunity to look at things in a new way and it has been gratifying to see our team find success despite the uncertainty," said Olfert noting the dozens of ideas that have come in that continue to be explored and put into action, including a new Jets Hockey Development ringette camp that ran in August at Bell MTS Iceplex (organized and led by the Manitoba Moose sales and production team).

Fostering a positive workplace culture has long been a priority for True North but in the face of distanced working and disruptions to usual seasonal schedules and tasks, creating the right conditions for remote and continued engagement has been a focal point.

"We are an organization that focuses on people and experiences, both for our guests and our employees," said Haus. "Although we cannot be together as we normally are, and we might not be doing all the things that are most familiar to us at this time of year, it is more important than ever to reinforce that we are collaborating in an environment of trust and to ensure that our employees feel heard, trusted and valued, and know that they are meaningfully contributing."

For more information, visit [tnse.com](https://tnse.com).



TRUE NORTH SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT PHOTO

THE DEEP-ROOTED ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES THAT TRUE NORTH SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO DURING TIMES OF SUCCESS AND GROWTH HAVE CONTINUED TO GUIDE THE ORGANIZATION DURING THE PANDEMIC.

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## WINNIPEG AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

## FLYING HIGH IN DIFFICULT TIMES

BY JIM TIMLICK

It should hardly come as a surprise to see the Winnipeg Airports Authority ranked once again among Manitoba's Top Employers.

The community-based corporation, which operates Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport, has been a perennial fixture of the competition since it was first launched. In fact, this year marks the 11th time in the past 12 years the WAA has been recognized as one of the province's most exceptional workplaces.

"There's just something about having been named to this list as often as we have. It's almost become an expectation of the team now that we're going to be one of the leaders in this area," says WAA president and CEO Barry Rempel.

The WAA's manager of human resources Kyle Hunt concurs.

"Any time you're able to look at your organization and find it on a list like this it makes you feel good about where you work and what you're doing," he says. "You can really get caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday tasks and getting things done. This lets everyone look at where we are and look forward to where we want to be."

While being named to Manitoba's Top Employers might not rank as out of the ordinary, it's hardly been business as usual for the WAA this past year. Passenger travel at Winnipeg's airport dropped by as much as 95 per cent at times during the COVID-19 pandemic and the corporation had to make some hard choices as a result, including shelving a number of capital

projects and laying off a small number of employees.

Rempel says the WAA quickly identified two priorities when the pandemic first struck back in March. One was to retain as many of its skilled people as possible. The other was to reach out to employees and promote a sense of connectedness even as many of them shifted to working from home.

To do that, the WAA posted regular updates on its intranet site to keep employees informed of all the latest happenings at work. It also launched a series of online contests as well as a virtual lunchroom where employees could share lunch even though they were kilometres apart.

The community-based corporation's focus on employee wellness is not exactly new. The WAA has been offering a number of perks and programs to promote physical, financial and social well-being since its formation more than 20 years ago. All WAA employees have free access to an onsite fitness facility at the airport. The corporation also provides a lifestyle spending account that provides employees with funds that can be used towards gym memberships, personal exercise equipment, hiking gear or anything that promotes a healthy, active lifestyle. The WAA's wellness committee also plans to roll out a new app soon that's designed to "gamify" the wellness experience and encourage people to achieve their personal health goals.

"Research is showing us more and more that employees who are physically fit and in a positive mental state can go a long way in determining how they feel about a company and help them stay on top of doing their job," Rempel says.

In addition to providing generous health



WINNIPEG AIRPORTS AUTHORITY PHOTOS

WINNIPEG AIRPORTS AUTHORITY IS THE COMMUNITY-BASED CORPORATION WHICH OPERATES WINNIPEG JAMES ARMSTRONG RICHARDSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

benefits and retirement contribution packages, the WAA offers parental leave top-up payments to new moms and dads as well as adoptive parents. New moms can receive up to 93 per cent of their salary for 32 weeks while new dads and adoptive parents are eligible to get 93 per cent of their salary for 15 weeks.

"It can be a very challenging discussion to have between partners when it comes to who takes the parental leave and for how long and how that impacts their earnings," Hunt says. "We're fortunate and happy to take away some of the stress for new parents while they're going through a pretty major life shift."

As challenging as the last several months have been, the WAA's commitment to community has remained steadfast. That in-

cludes its many charitable contributions to causes such as the United Way, Winnipeg Harvest and the annual Girls in Aviation Day event. The organization encourages employees to get involved in these efforts with paid time off. Last year, WAA employees provided more than 2,100 hours of volunteer service to a host of community groups.

"It really goes back to our founding and an understanding that we're here to serve the community," Rempel explains. "Giving back has become part of our organizational culture."

For more information, visit [waa.ca](http://waa.ca).

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## WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD OF MANITOBA COLLABORATION & CONNECTION FLOURISH AT WCB DURING PANDEMIC



COMMUNICATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STRENGTH AT THE WCB, AND IT'S ONLY GROWN STRONGER UNDER THE STRESS OF THE PANDEMIC. A UNITED WAY RALLYING FOR RECOVERY PHOTO CONTEST HAD STAFF VERY ENGAGED. HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE PICTURES SENT IN BY EMPLOYEES SHOWING THE MANY WAYS THEY WERE STAYING ACTIVE OUTSIDE OF WORK.

Compassion and collaboration are among the core values of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba — values that have perhaps never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The emergence of COVID-19 has brought many challenges and unexpected adjustments. An already collaborative workplace with a solid base of communications has grown to ensure employees are able to maintain connections, work co-operatively while physically separated and continue to provide excellent service to customers, all while remaining safe and healthy. Communication tools that were enhanced to meet the demands of the arrival of

COVID have carried forward as a positive effect of the pandemic.

With 95 per cent of the WCB's roughly 600 employees ultimately transitioning home to work, physical distance and technology were among the early issues that needed to be resolved. Staff worked collaboratively and adapted quickly in response.

"Although they've been physically separated, our employees have come together and worked as a team to ensure our customers continue to receive the same excellent service," said Winston Maharaj, former president and CEO, who retired from the WCB at the end of October. "Employees across the organization have contributed not only to ongoing service, but to keeping our workplace safe and healthy as well. I'm proud of the way our staff have pulled together."

Increased communication and connection has been vital, and it's taken many forms.

Frequent communications to staff from the executive increased as waves of employees left the office to work from home. Ongoing messages from leadership keep staff updated on the latest pandemic news and provide information on the evolving work environment. A pandemic recovery planning committee has been created to guide efforts and provide ongoing email updates and other information to staff. Regular messages from the president and CEO give employees a more personal take on the situation, and provide support and encouragement. Employees are invited to ask questions at any time; answers are shared through leaders' email messages and in Q-and-A documents.

### POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM STAFF

Feedback on the increased communication has been very positive, with some employees even sending unsolicited emails to leaders to express their appreciation for the leadership shown and the effort to keep everyone connected during such an unprecedented time.

"We want to encourage everyone to stay well-connected and to make the transition to a changing work environment as smooth as possible," said Shannon Earle, Vice-President, Human Resources and Strategy. "Working from home can come with many distractions and other challenges, and we're really proud of the way our staff have stepped up and demonstrated how dedicated they are to their work."

Most importantly, communication has not only been "top down." The WCB's workplace safety and health committee sends out regular tips on a range of subjects from practical at-home ergonomics information to more lighthearted messages and uplifting videos. The existing staff newsletter is used to share stories and pictures from employees at home and those who remain at the office. Employees in various departments have found creative ways to stay in touch — one area established a shared music library; others

have regular video coffee breaks. Response to a United Way Rallying for Recovery photo contest was overwhelming, with staff sharing numerous pictures of their activities during off-work hours. Although they were physically separated, this allowed staff to maintain connections and stay up-to-date with their colleagues.

Over the summer, as preparations began for a gradual return to the office, leaders talked to each employee to ask about their readiness to return and to address any concerns. The recovery planning committee prepared a gradual, cautious return, taking employees' feedback into account. A small pilot group returned to test the waters first. A walk-through video and orientation module were created to give employees a sense of what to expect and to provide information to help keep everyone safe. As COVID case numbers began to grow in October, though, employees were required to work from home once again. Fortunately, all of the work involved in preparing for the return to the office will mean a smooth transition back, once it's safe.

### PUTTING VALUES INTO ACTION

While the pandemic has brought many difficulties, it has also given the WCB a chance to shine. Staff members see the organization's values in action on an everyday basis — in an environment of respect and inclusion, and two-way communication. These values have been more obviously demonstrated during the pandemic. As the WCB works to return to a "new normal," enhanced connections will make it an even greater place to work.

"This is the 10th consecutive year that we've received this Top Employer honour, and we hope to continue earning this recognition in years to come," said Maharaj. "We're striving to attract the best and the brightest, and to be an employer that Manitobans want to build a career with."

For more information, visit [wcb.mb.ca](http://wcb.mb.ca).



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