

THE FRONT LINE

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS IS ALWAYS A PRIORITY



A big part of what we do as a credit union has to do with our communities. For more than 80 years, we've strived to be a good neighbour, to be more than a financial institution and to make an impact. This year, a lot of things are different – but one thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to student nutrition. We were happy to give \$250,000 to not-for-profit agencies to support healthy snacks in schools this year.

Access to nutritious food is critical in giving young students the boost they need for a full day of learning. We're proud to work with local organizations like Brant Food for Thought, Halton Food for Thought, Niagara Nutrition Partners, Haldimand-Norfolk REACH, Southwestern Public Health and the Hamilton Bulldogs Foundation to help make that happen. Since we started this initiative

in 2014, we've donated close to \$1.7 million to try and reach as many kids as we can. Our Blue Wave employee volunteers play an important role in these programs and they are usually prepping food for students before they head to work for the day. Despite some tough challenges this year, they continue to show support any way they can. Thanks to everyone who plays a part in representing FirstOntario, a credit union that cares.

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR



Throughout 2020, FirstOntario adapted quickly to meet the challenges created by the ongoing pandemic. This led us to the decision to close two branches, our Niagara Street location in St. Catharines and our Lime Ridge Mall branch in Hamilton. The advanced age of our Niagara Street location and the proximity to nearby branches were factors in these decisions. The Lime Ridge Mall location now houses our investment advisors and business banking services, however, the Personal Assisted Teller/ATM machine remains at this location. Our Members' safe and easy access to our banking products and services remains a top priority.

The addition of Toronto-based Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union to the FirstOntario family was a highlight of 2020. These 2,000 plus performing arts Members include thespians, musicians and behind-the-scenes production support. Their unique needs and our commitment to supporting the performing arts made us natural partners. We're thrilled to welcome them under the banner of Creative Arts Financial. The unique nature of this sector means these Members will largely interact with us digitally. In 2020, the pandemic also forced us to hold our Annual General Meeting online. The feedback was excellent and with continued pandemic protocols, we are proceeding with an online AGM again this April.

I do have some sad news to share. FirstOntario lost a valued Director in 2020. Mike Shepherd passed away this past November. Mike joined FirstOntario's Board in April 2017 and was a knowledgeable resource and a kind and well-respected man. He will be greatly missed.

Finally, thanks to everyone who reached out to me regarding the new fee to receive paper statements. We have listened and this fee has been removed. As always, I'd like to hear from you, owner to owner - about anything; where we did well, where we stumbled, or just to say hello... please feel free to email me at Chair@FirstOntario.com.

CAREY SMITH
Chair, Board of Directors

Here's how the Board of Directors voting period works



Our annual Board Election is your opportunity to choose the fellow Members you feel will best fill important roles on your Board of Directors. Candidates will be announced and voting will run from January 15 to February 26.

Members can vote in this year's election in three different ways:

1. Vote electronically through online banking; or
2. Vote through our mobile smartphone app; or
3. Cast your vote at your local FirstOntario branch

If you are not set up for online banking and wish to vote online, call us by January 8 at 1-800-616-8878.

For the first time, your Board of Directors is endorsing four candidates. As a financial institution with over \$5 billion in assets, effective governance is essential to our continued success. It's a responsibility your Board takes very seriously. FirstOntario has five positions open on the Board this year. The endorsed candidates have extensive knowledge and experience with the credit union system with strong governance and financial literacy skills and other qualifications and attributes. Candidates were subject to a pre-screening to ensure their eligibility to run, a police background check, a skills self-assessment and interviews by an independent consultant as well as the Board's Elections Committee.

We are asking you to consider the Board's four recommended candidates who will be highlighted on this year's ballot, when casting your votes. Successful candidates will be announced at our Annual General Meeting on April 21. All FirstOntario Members are welcome to attend. For more information, please visit FirstOntario.com.

1

NEW EVERYDAY ACCOUNTS COME WITH FREE INTERAC E-TRANSFERS®



We know many of our Members enjoy the ease and convenience of sending money via e-Transfer. That's why our new chequing accounts come with free e-Transfers, unlimited transactions and more!

Visit FirstOntario.com/ChequingAccounts to learn about all of the features. You can access these accounts now, so call our Member Solutions Centre at 1-800-616-8878 to make the switch.

All Members who have our previous suite of accounts will be moved to a new account in early 2021. Find full details at FirstOntario.com/MovingAccounts.

VISA CREDIT CARD UPDATES COMING SOON



What are you looking for in a credit card? Stay tuned, because in a few weeks there will be even more features offered with our FirstOntario Visa credit cards. Think mobile device insurance and emergency travel medical insurance coverage for up to 60 days! You'll have access to one of Canada's only no fee, low interest rate cards and you'll also be able to earn rewards faster in popular categories like gas, groceries, entertainment (live and digital) and dining. Look forward to flexible reward redemption options – trade your points for cash that's deposited right into your credit union chequing account. With all of these new features, we're sure you will find the right card for you. Stay tuned to FirstOntario.com for details!

INVESTMENT SAVINGS OPPORTUNITY WITH QTRADE INVESTOR

Get a Visa Gift Card when you open, fund and trade in a new online brokerage account. Don't wait to enjoy the benefits of investing for your future. With Qtrade® Investor, get up to \$2,000 cash* when you open, fund and trade in a new online brokerage account. The offer is available for the first 500 people who qualify, so don't delay.

Invest for the future and get extra cash to spend on yourself. Talk to us today or learn more at FirstOntario.com/qtrade.

*Qtrade is a registered trademark of Aviso Wealth Inc. Online brokerage services are offered through Qtrade Investor, a division of Credential Qtrade Securities Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Aviso Wealth Inc.



MARKET-LINKED GICS

Our market-linked GICs offer 100% principal protection and the potential for higher returns. There's nowhere to go but up! Visit FirstOntario.com to learn more.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURE



Our branches, Member Solutions Centre and Personal Assisted Tellers will be closed on Monday, February 15 for **FAMILY DAY**. Our ATMs and online/mobile banking will be available 24/7.




1









STAY SECURE WITH INTERAC E-TRANSFER® SERVICE



With Fraud Awareness Month approaching in March – it’s a good reminder to always exercise caution when it comes to banking. At FirstOntario, our Members can safely send money to anyone in Canada via [Interac e-Transfer](#) through online banking, but like with any financial activity – both online and in person – we should always be alert.

Here are some ways to stay safe when sending money.

-  Only send money to people you know and trust. An e-Transfer cannot be reversed once the funds have been deposited.
-  Never use an obvious or easy-to-guess security question, like “What colour is the sky”.
-  Be sure your security answer is not related to anything located on your social media pages, such as a child’s name or dog’s name.

-  Ensure the security answer is given through a secure channel that doesn’t match the one the notification was sent through. The best idea is to give the password in person or over phone call.
-  Register for *Interac* e-Transfer Autodeposit. Increase ease of use and reduce the possibility of a transfer being intercepted.
-  Ensure your device is secure and free from viruses and malware. The same goes for your email platform.
-  If you receive a notification that seems suspicious, forward the email to phishing@interac.ca so the fraud team can investigate.
-  Avoid sharing personal information online – for example, don’t share your birthday, your mother’s maiden name, or similar identification questions.
-  Use two-factor authentication on email accounts. If your email provider doesn’t offer this, consider switching to one that does.
-  Don’t use the same passwords for online banking or email accounts that you use to access your social media sites.
-  If you receive an e-Transfer and the sender immediately wants you to deposit those funds somewhere else, it could be fraud related. Please inform your branch or the Member Solutions Centre about the issue.

Interac e-Transfers are not intended to be used for payroll. If you must use it this way, FirstOntario advises you to double check that all of the information used (phone numbers, email addresses, etc.) are correct before you send the transfer. The safest way to use this service for the purpose of payroll is to ask your employees to register for *Interac* e-Transfer Autodeposit to help remove the risk of interception.

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS: NEED TO KNOW

The RRSP contribution deadline for the 2020 tax year is March 1. The information you need to determine your contribution room can be found in your 2020 Notice of Assessment. If you need help with this, connect with the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-267-6999. You will need your Social Insurance Number, birth date and the amount printed on Line 150 of your previous year’s tax return.

Our experienced wealth advisors can help guide you along your path to retirement and determine what works best for you. Call 1-800-616-8878 ext. 1700 to make an appointment today.

