

# The Front Line

## Community partners join forces to offer support to those in need



While the holidays are a wonderful time of year for many, it can be tough for others, including social service agencies and local food banks that see a surge in visitors at this time of year. To address the need, FirstOntario Credit Union was able to recognize the season of giving with a \$120,000 donation to 19 different community partners that support food insecurity. Our credit union has been fortunate to be able to give \$480,000 over the last four years to address the need as food banks try to keep up with the demand.

“FirstOntario is committed to doing what we can to make a difference in our communities,” said Lloyd Smith, CEO, FirstOntario.

“Food insecurity is among the key priority issues of focus for our organization and this donation is designed to provide some level of assistance to those in need. We hope that our

involvement and position can inspire other organizations to join the effort.”

A recent report from Food Banks Canada found that the use of food banks has increased by 90% since 2019 and is now at its highest level ever. The number of children using food banks has increased from 300,000 per month five years ago, to a staggering 700,000 now.

This support followed another \$250,000 donation to student nutrition programs in November, increasing our overall investment to \$2.6 million in funding to dedicated partners who continue to ensure students get access to healthy snacks at school. If you're able, consider donating to food banks in your neighbourhood throughout the year. These organizations usually offer lists of items that are mostly needed at that particular time.

## A note from Our Chair



Season's greetings to everyone as we wind down the holiday season and close out another successful year at the credit union. Our membership continues to grow, our suite of products and services expands each year and our commitment to our communities gets stronger.

For the tenth consecutive year, we've been fortunate to be able to contribute to our local student nutrition programs. In November, we distributed \$250,000 to the organizations that facilitate these crucial programs in elementary schools. In December, we split \$120,000 across 19 local agencies and food banks because they cannot keep up with the demand.

Our Blue Wave volunteer team gave 1,500 hours in 2024 to causes throughout our regions. FirstOntario has built a strong network of employees who are willing and eager to get out there and make a difference helping numerous organizations, events, fundraisers and initiatives. Thanks to all of our volunteers who show up when they are needed.

Looking ahead, we're preparing for this year's election. The candidate search period went well – we met with many people who were interested in running for a position on the Board. We're happy to let you know several successful candidates emerged from the information sessions and interview process. Election details are covered in this edition of the newsletter and on our website. Please read more about the candidates and the process so you can get involved and vote for the members you think would be an asset to our Board.

Our teams at FirstOntario are already working on 2025 projects which include several digital enhancements. Keep an eye out for new campaigns and ways to take advantage of our products and services to make your money grow. We'll share all the details of launches, promotions and the election at [FirstOntario.com](http://FirstOntario.com). In the meantime, feel free to connect with me directly through [Chair@FirstOntario.com](mailto:Chair@FirstOntario.com) anytime. Happy New Year everyone!

**Steve Boucouvalas**  
Chair, Board of Directors

## This year's board election kicks off in February

Contribute to our continued success by voting in your Board of Directors election running from February 3 to March 3. Candidates will be featured in the voting package that will be available in branches and online starting February 3.

As a successful credit union with over \$7 billion in assets under management, our regulator, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario, requires qualified members with the necessary skills and experience to serve on your Board. There are four vacancies for this election and the candidates with the highest voting results will be elected for a three-year term.

FirstOntario's Governance Committee interviewed all candidates, and the Board has endorsed those with the required qualifications. We ask you to please consider the Board's endorsements when casting your votes. You can vote in several ways:

1. Through online banking: [FirstOntario.com](http://FirstOntario.com) and [CreativeArtsFinancial.com](http://CreativeArtsFinancial.com) (recommended)
2. Through the FirstOntario mobile app
3. At any FirstOntario or Creative Arts Financial branch

Commercial members are required to vote at any FirstOntario branch. Those who wish to appoint a proxy vote on their behalf must complete a proxy form (available online or in branches) and should include it with the completed ballot.

Election results will be announced at FirstOntario's virtual Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, April 23. All members are welcome to attend.



## Family Day weekend closures



Saturday, February 15  
Monday, February 17

*Our Member Service Centre, Member Solutions Team and Personal Assisted Teller services will be available on February 15 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Online/mobile banking is available 24/7.*

# Simplify your everyday with mobile wallet



[FirstOntario.com/MobileWallet](https://FirstOntario.com/MobileWallet)

# Get a travel insurance quote

[FirstOntario.com/Travel](https://FirstOntario.com/Travel)

1-877-885-2847

Tell them you're a FirstOntario member and reference code 2581



**cumis**

*Travel insurance does not cover everything. For complete terms, conditions, limitations and exclusions, please review the certificate of insurance. Travel insurance is underwritten by CUMIS General Insurance Company, a member of the Co-operators group of companies and administered by Allianz Global Assistance, which is a registered business name of AZGA Service Canada Inc.*

## Did you know?



### FirstOntario 1Awards are coming

The 13th annual FirstOntario 1Awards small business competition is almost here. Stay tuned to [1Awards.ca](https://1Awards.ca) to find out how you can pitch to win cash and in-kind services. Applications open March 1.



### Our Market Conduct Code is available online

Our Market Conduct Code outlines best practices and principles that guide the way we do business. It reinforces our commitment to you. View it through [FirstOntario.com/MarketConductCode](https://FirstOntario.com/MarketConductCode).



### Don't miss this year's RRSP deadline

Get your 2024 RRSP contributions in before the deadline on March 3. If you have any questions, connect with us by calling 1-800-616-8878 ext. 1700.



### Need help with your online password?

If you're unable to log in or are locked out of online banking, reset your personal access code from home! Simply click *Forgot Password* on the log in page and reset it in minutes.

# Transferring money online: Be aware of e-Transfer scams

Transferring money online has become an easy, convenient and secure way to get funds from point A to point B. But users should be weary of potential scams and risks that are out there. Here are few examples to keep in mind when you are sending money to someone electronically.

## Online marketplaces



Fraudsters list something for sale on platforms like Facebook or Kijiji, ask for payment in advance and never deliver the product. Best practices: Meet the seller in a public place and don't send any money until you have the item. Also look for seller reviews if they are available.

## Rental scams



Criminals posing as landlords ask for a deposit via money transfer before the renter sees the property. After the deposit is sent, the unsuspecting victim learns there was no landlord and no rental property. Best practices: Avoid any landlord who won't meet in person and never commit without confirming the legitimacy of the address.

## Romance scams



After some time, fraudsters who've gained trust as a potential love interest ask for money to travel or help with an emergency. Once the money is transferred, the romance is over and the money is gone. Best practices: Be cautious when someone you've known for a short time asks for money – especially if you've never met in person.

**Remember!** *Interac* e-Transfers cannot be reversed once the funds have been deposited. Only send money to people you know and trust. Always use strong security questions and answers and set up Autodeposit for added security. If you receive an unexpected e-Transfer, confirm details with the sender or your financial institution - fraudulent transfers are also *sent* to unsuspecting victims.



## **Interac:** Send money safely tip

Do you send multiple e-Transfers to a specific recipient? Be aware that by default, the same security question and answer applies to all transfers sent to that person. Remain vigilant: with this information, a malicious person could intercept all applicable transfers this way. Be sure to choose strong security questions and change them often.

