



## **MEC Member Profile**

If you love the life that the great outdoors provides – adventure, healthy challenges, friendship, and fun– then chances are you’ve heard of **Mountain Equipment Co-op**.

MEC is a retail co-operative specializing in clothing, gear and services to support active outdoor lifestyles. They help members pursue their favorite activities and are committed to celebrating the outdoor community to which we all belong. MEC’s membership numbers almost 4 million in Canada, and 25% of these members live in Ontario. The co-op also provides 1,700 employees with meaningful jobs in accessible working locations. They are a shining example of a co-operative that remains competitive, yet is highly focused on its community.



Mountain Equipment Co-op began in 1971, in Vancouver, BC. Their founding myth, sometimes called the ‘*spirit of the tent*’, initiated the idea of creating a member-owned co-op to outfit local climbers with supplies. The company continues to evolve in step with its members by providing equipment for over two dozen activities which include cycling, hiking, running, climbing, paddle-sports, yoga, cross-fit, and many others. After establishing its retail presence, MEC became an early adopter of e-commerce platforms in Canada, with online sales beginning in 2001. Today, [mec.ca](http://mec.ca) serves as the hub of the co-op’s ‘omni-channel’ retail offering. Their brick and mortar presence in Ontario includes stores in **Toronto, Ottawa, Burlington, Barrie, and London**.



A lifetime membership at MEC costs \$5 - the same price since its inception! This buys each member a single share and a single vote, allowing them to participate in MEC’s democratic co-op structure. Members also benefit from patronage redemptions based on annual purchases. In fact, last year alone, MEC awarded \$4.5 million to more than 165,000 members - the largest redemption in the company’s history.

MEC is a relatively large co-operative and is financially healthy, but still holds true to serving its community.

Delivering value and customer service, operating a sustainable enterprise that treats people with respect and treading a relatively light ecological footprint are the cornerstones of its success. In fact, MEC commits one percent of annual gross sales – over \$3 million last year – to community-based grants in support of environmental conservation and infrastructure for outdoor activities. Recent grants include \$100,000 to the Ontario Access Society to protect Old Baldy, a popular climbing area on the Niagara Escarpment near Thornbury.



Outdoor activities are shared activities, which is why MEC hosted more than 30,000 members at some 3,500 events across Canada last year. These events included festivals like Snowfest, Bikefest, Paddlefest and community events like runs, meet-ups and clinics. Information on MEC's events can be found on their Community and Events portal online.



This co-op is always seeking new ways to support its members, both today and in the future. They are planning the launch of their North York location in 2016, and have recently opened their brand new head office in Vancouver.

Future areas of focus for MEC include more integration between retail and web services, new store launches, helping their employees embody healthy lifestyles, and of course, serving their membership that built the business into what it is today.

Visit MEC online at <http://www.mec.ca/> and click [HERE](#) for pictures of their new head office!



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