



**Tell us a bit about your co-operative – its origins, purpose and what needs/value your organization provides to the community.**

Hay Communications started as a telephone company in 1911. Our roots are in the small towns of Zurich, Grand Bend and Dashwood located in Southwest Ontario on the coast of Lake Huron. We have grown our territory and have become a full service telecommunications co-operative offering internet, television, telephone, security and mobile services.

Marketing and communication with members and customers is different from other providers by being open and understandable. We don't want to be the same, we want to be better.

**How is your co-operative responding to the current needs of the community?**

We have changed how we work and where many of us call our office during the current situation, but our service is still delivered over a stable network and we continue to offer connectivity that is reliable. Our staff are able to fully communicate with our customers in order for them to receive a quality product.

Donations and sponsorships help to build communities. Over the years Hay has been part of community growth by supporting large projects like sports venues, health care and a local hospice to small events like town fairs and car shows. During recent times we have changed our main focus to those in need and donated additional funds to places like local rest homes and area food banks.

**What is your vision for co-operatives in rebuilding the economy post-pandemic?**

While large companies pull back and rebuild their market share by spending money on marketing, co-operatives will be in the community seeing the immediate needs of members. We have always been open to donation requests and the community knows they can come to us. Our staff live in our serviced communities, if a need is revealed, we can respond quickly. For

example, Hay responded to a need in 2020 by giving every business account a month of internet at no charge. Local businesses, many seasonal, appreciated the break.

**What does the future of the co-operative sector in Ontario look like to you?**

Co-operative ideals are regaining momentum everywhere. The co-operative principles, from our structure to our actual community values, make us different. Because co-operatives are maintaining competitive prices and quality service, people can focus more on the value of being part of a local or like-minded group. These principles are becoming more and more important to people and communities.

**What aspect of OCA's mission/strategic programs do you think is most important as a way to rebuild a more co-operative economy?**

The OCA organization doesn't just highlight businesses, it highlights a CO-OPERATIVE business and how it's different. You maintain a link to governments and local organizations. While OCA works to bring about awareness of co-operatives in general, our focus can remain local on how we can help our members.