

OCA Board Member Profile



Joel Lalonde, President and CEO, Your Credit Union
Representing Central 1 Credit Union on the Board of OCA

1. Tell us a bit about yourself!

I have been married to my wonderful wife Lisa for 17 years, and we have a daughter who is 12. We live in Orleans, a suburb of Ottawa. I am originally from eastern Ontario and attended the University of Ottawa where I completed a Bachelor of Commerce and an MBA. I am currently in my tenth year with Your Credit Union, five as its President and CEO. I have loved every minute of it, it's been an awesome journey so far.

2. How long have you been involved in the co-operative movement, and what do you love most about it?

I have been a member of a co-operative for 34 years - my first car loan was from a Caisse Populaire! I've been employed in the co-operative sector for twenty years, 10 years with the Ontario Caisses Populaires before coming over to Your Credit Union.

What I love most about co-operatives is that people are at the heart of the business model. Staff, members, and the community-at-large come ahead of the drive for profit and growth. It's a very ethical business model.

3. If there is one thing you would want people to know about co-ops, what would it be?

I would say that all Canadians would benefit from being an engaged member of a co-operative because of the model's commitment to providing value first and foremost to its members.

4. Why is your co-operative a member of OCA? What do you think are some of the benefits of being a member?

Fundamentally, a strong co-operative sector is the main benefit to Central 1 Credit Union, and being a strong partner to OCA is a benefit to the entire co-op sector. This is a good partnership. The more integrated as a system we are, the better our abilities are to grow and attract our business model. Ultimately, shared values and principles means shared success.

5. Why did you decide to join the OCA board as a Director?

The opportunity to contribute to the system at the provincial level was of interest to me, both locally through my credit union, and nationally through Central 1. I am very happy to have this opportunity to be on the OCA Board!

6. How has your past experience helped you in this role?

I am highly passionate about the co-operative structure and its ability to contribute to communities. I have enjoyed a great twenty year career in the sector, and have experienced many examples of these contributions, which has fueled my passion and kept the fire in me burning. The motivation is simple. I wanted to contribute to OCA and be part of its governance. My experience has provided me with the knowledge and experience to contribute to the healthy governance of a co-operative.

7. What do you think are some of the opportunities and challenges facing OCA in the next 3 to 5 years?

The opportunity is to bring the system together more so than ever before. This includes both credit unions and co-operatives of all types and industries. Recent success in our

Government Relations work shows our potential for this and what working together can do. We just need to do it more consistently and with a broader stroke. We need to build greater integration and traction for long-term momentum and success. If we don't work collectively, we will never be as well off as we can be.

I believe the greatest challenge facing OCA is the constant need to provide value to our members, who are greatly varied in their size, scale and business focus. It is hard to provide value across entire sector.

8. What is your vision for OCA?

My vision is for OCA to be the home of co-operatives in Ontario. That it continue to provide the guidance and resources to grow our system across the board – whether that is assisting the creation of new co-operatives or strengthening and expand existing co-ops. My wish for OCA is to become a strong initiator of and agent of change and growth for the sector.

9. Share a fun/silly thing that not many people know about you!

A silly thing most people don't know about me is that I haven't chewed gum since I was eleven years old! Basically, I once had a bad experience when I rode my bike to the store to get some gum for my brother. I fell of the bike. When I got home, I threw the gum at him and vowed to never chew gum again...so I haven't!