

New index grades Ontario municipalities on co-operative values and community strength

St. Catharines amongst the top in first-ever ranking

St. Catharines, ON, October 15, 2015 – The City of St. Catharines has ranked third in a new ranking of Ontario municipalities based on co-operative values including civic engagement, green space, charitable giving and the availability of social programs.

The new [Co-operative Communities Index](#) released by Credit Unions of Ontario is a province-wide initiative highlighting the values behind [Co-operative Banking](#), including concern for community and charitable spirit.

“We are fortunate to be able to see this strong sense of community spirit first-hand, in all that we do here in St. Catharines”, said Bob Watson, Chief Executive Officer for Niagara based Credit Union, PenFinancial. “Being a local co-operative with strong roots in the community, we are proud to see St. Catharines recognized for sharing the same co-operative values that we all hold dear.”

Steve Bolton, Chair of the Credit Unions of Ontario says, “The Co-operative Communities Index reminds us that successful communities are not just about financial wealth, but also about things like treating others with respect, making a difference, helping each other out, and giving back.”

The top 30 communities were selected from six regional groups, and ranked according to scores in five categories: Civic Engagement, Shared Green Spaces, Charitable Spirit, Social Investment and Community Assets.

Each 10-point category was researched using municipal websites, telephone interviews and resources including Statistics Canada and local Volunteer Canada directories.

St. Catharines placed third in the index through its strong showing in the “Social Investment”, “Charitable Spirit” and “Civic Engagement” categories. Additional highlights include:

- Kawartha Lakes and Greater Sudbury earned the highest possible score for Community Assets, based on the number of libraries, arenas, public pools, community centres per capita
- Brampton and Toronto have the most Shared Green Spaces, or total area of public park land
- Brockville leads in Charitable Spirit, with 172 non-profits and charitable organizations – the most per capita
- Orillia and Cambridge have tied for highest level of Social Investment, or the percentage of their municipal budget allocated to community resources
- Barrie, Brampton, Guelph and North Bay are tied for highest level of Civic Engagement, or the accessibility of municipal resources and the mayor’s office
- The region consisting of Peterborough, Kawartha Lakes, Orillia, Barrie, and Belleville form Ontario’s “most co-operative region”

2015 Co-operative Communities Index		
Rank	Community	Score / 50
1	Orillia	43
2	Ottawa	40.25
3	St. Catharines	36
4	Chatham-Kent	35.5
5	Guelph	35
5	Thunder Bay	35
7	Kawartha Lakes	33
8	Windsor	32.5
9	Brantford	32
9	Belleville	32
9	Kitchener	32
12	Cornwall	31.5
13	Pembroke	30.5
14	Barrie	30

Rank	Community	Score / 50
15	Cambridge	29
15	Hamilton	29
17	Brockville	28.5
18	Toronto	28
19	Mississauga	27.5
19	Peterborough	27.5
21	North Bay	27
22	Brampton	26.5
23	Kingston	26
23	London	26
25	Burlington	25
25	Greater Sudbury	25
27	Timmins	24.5
28	Vaughan	23.75
29	Sault Ste. Marie	21.5
30	Markham	18

“The Co-operative Communities Index offers insight into the values of Ontario municipalities, and allows us to start a meaningful conversation about how we live and work,” said Bolton. “We are proud to have a presence in these communities, and to support their spirit of co-operation.”

The release of the Co-operative Communities Index coincides with [International Credit Union Day](#) on October 15, 2015—a day to honour those who have dedicated their lives to the credit union movement’s history and promote its achievements through this year’s message of “People Helping People.”

International Credit Union Day also takes place during Co-Op Week (October 11-17), which is an opportunity for Canadian co-operative and credit union members to celebrate the fact that they have collectively helped to build this country through the theme of “Our Co-op Advantage.” Charitable contributions by Ontario credit unions reached \$8,495,760, according to the Credit Union Central of Canada’s 2014 Community Involvement Survey.

To download a copy of the Co-operative Communities Index infographic overview, please click [here](#). For a copy of the full research report, please click [here](#).

About the Co-operative Communities Index

The Co-operative Communities Index is a province-wide initiative led by Credit Unions of Ontario ranking 30 Ontario communities on their commitment to co-operative values, including civic engagement, shared green spaces, charitable spirit, social investment and community assets. Information for the index was gathered through online resources, including municipal websites, as well as one-on-one interviews with local community sources. The CCI attributes a numerical index, with points being credited based on the five categories rated.

About Credit Unions of Ontario

Credit Unions of Ontario provide a full range of competitive financial products and services to over 1.5 million members—both individuals and organizations—across Ontario. Their mission is to raise awareness of credit unions among Ontarians and inspire them to join the co-operative banking movement, allowing them to make a real difference to their financial lives and the communities in which they live. For more information, and for a list of participating/founding credit unions, please visit www.cooperativebanking.ca.

For more information, research materials or to request an interview please contact:

Josh Juhlke
 PenFinancial Credit Union
 905-328-7431 | josh.juhlke@penfinancial.com

Jody Vizza
 PenFinancial Credit Union
 905-401-6509 | jody.vizza@penfinancial.com