WHAT WE OWE

This is what we owe. And it’s personal.
OPPORTUNITY

The perfect house at the right price. A smart idea for growing a business, or for creating a new one from scratch. An investment that leads to a better future. Getting a fair shot at the perfect job – and landing it. With so many doors waiting to be opened by so many different kinds of people, what we owe above all is fairness. It’s about giving everyone an equal chance to fulfill their potential.
Translating complex problems into simple solutions. Explaining clearly why one step follows from another. Reducing the number of layers between a reasonable question and a helpful answer. It isn’t hard to keep things simple. You just need to empower people to focus on what really matters. What remains when you take away all the clutter. What truly adds value.
Important challenges are sometimes complicated. How do we balance growing the economy with protecting the environment when both sides make valid points? How much risk is appropriate, and is everyone using the same yardstick? What counts more, good jobs today or solid prospects for the future? It takes time to understand all the dimensions and make a decision that does justice to the bigger picture.
There’s one sure way to guarantee that everyone understands what you’re trying to do, and why: tell the truth. Not selectively. Not hidden in the fine print or behind clever spin. People know when a message is clear and forthright, and when someone stands behind it. And while they may not always agree with what you say, they’ll respect the honesty. Because it shows respect for them.
To feel truly confident takes more than a positive outlook. It’s a conviction grounded in trust. The people we guide and encourage know that we keep our promises, are accountable for what we do and have their best interests at heart. When our customers, employees and other stakeholders have confidence in us, they feel empowered to make the right choices—and that gets all of us closer to our goals.

Iain Klugman, president and CEO of Communitech, Waterloo, Ontario.
BMO’s understanding of corporate responsibility is grounded in the day-to-day realities of banking. Of course we constantly re-evaluate the impact our actions have on our stakeholders. But our perspective is ultimately shaped by the individual stories of customers who count on us for guidance and support.

Adding Up What We Owe
Like all large businesses, banks have a responsibility that extends far beyond the world of profit and loss. Operating according to the letter of the law, or in narrowly defined compliance with regulations, simply isn’t enough. We have to make a positive difference in the lives of our customers, our employees and the communities we serve. And we have to lead by example, providing a model and setting a standard for others to follow.

For our bank, business performance is judged in relation to a set of basic principles that have guided us for nearly 200 years. We constantly stop to ask ourselves fundamental questions: Is this fair? Is it the right choice? Most importantly – and looking far past the minimum requirements – is it the best we can do?

Investing in the disciplines necessary to deliver against expectations – both societal and regulatory – is a source of long-term strength. And we reinforce that strength by having considerations of corporate responsibility and good citizenship permeate every conversation – not only within the organization, but as we contribute to the larger public conversation. It’s part of our responsibility as a bank to have a point of view, and to take on tough questions – about employment, the economy, the environment – that don’t resolve themselves into easy distinctions between right and wrong.

This is the context in which we produce BMO’s annual Corporate Responsibility Report. It’s our opportunity to explore the dimensions of responsibility as we see them, sharing our experiences and observations with everyone who has an interest in where we stand and how we back up our convictions. Our actions are what matter most. And when we talk to people about BMO – current and prospective customers, employees, investors and other partners – we find that they return to this document frequently to remind themselves of what we stand for and the commitments we’ve made.

In the following pages you’ll find stories drawn from BMO’s diverse customer base and highlighting various aspects of our business. The unifying theme is our belief that responsibility begins and ends with an obligation to do our job, and do it well. We owe it to the customers and communities who support us – and we owe it to ourselves – to foster the many individual successes that ultimately add up to economic prosperity, sustainable growth and a better quality of life for everyone.

Responsibility isn’t just something we reflect on once a year in a report. It’s something we live every day. And it’s personal.
It could be a start-up just launching or an established business reinventing itself. A conscientious saver on the way to becoming a homeowner or investor. An investment in an after-school program or a scholarship to help even the odds. A financial literacy workshop that empowers people to plan their future with confidence. And, of course, our own efforts to develop the potential of BMO’s talented employees – so they can do the same for our customers and communities.
Su Casa

A fixture of community life in the heart of Chicago, Casa Central provides opportunity, encouragement and hope to people trying to realize their full potential.

Ten Years Ago a Homeless Single Mother walked into Casa Central, a social service agency primarily serving Chicago’s Hispanic community, looking for help. She needed a job to support her three children but lacked marketable skills. The staff enrolled her in a course on computer basics – beginning with how to find the ‘on’ switch. And when an entry-level position opened up in the mailroom of a city newspaper, the team urged their nervous student to apply.

She needed a job to support her three children but lacked marketable skills.

Today she manages the department.

Hispanic social service agency in the U.S. Midwest, with more than 560 employees and an annual budget of $17 million.

The agency’s goals are summed up in its mission: “Casa Central transforms lives and strengthens communities with a special focus on Hispanics. Our network of services propels a diverse population of all ages toward self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life.” Those services range from childhood and adult education to seniors’ programs, from housing and support for homeless families to domestic violence counseling.

“Once you learn how to quantify what you do,” Ann says, “and you keep everyone focused on accomplishing those goals, you can demonstrate quality and success.”

Measuring Success

BMO Harris Bank’s long relationship with Casa Central covers the spectrum from banking services to employee volunteering to corporate giving. Access to unrestricted dollars – funds not tied to specific programming – enables the agency to quickly address changing priorities. “We have strong backing from the bank,” Ann says, “and we know they’re there if we get into a tight spot.”

What fuels Casa Central’s success is a commitment to operating like a business, with clear objectives, detailed work plans and quantifiable outcomes. Programs must maintain an 85% success rate – whether measured by people gaining employment, children advancing in school or other yardsticks of progress – reinforcing the belief that each step forward for an individual or family contributes to overall economic growth and prosperity.

First-time Homebuyers

BMO experts offered advice on finding an ideal home while balancing financial priorities, with tips on determining a budget, saving for a down payment and choosing the right mortgage. “The first step is to do an honest assessment of the household balance sheet,” explains Kevin Christopher, Head of Mortgage Sales. “Then you can make a responsible calculation of what you can afford.”

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Badger is a market leader known for its technologically advanced devices that measure and control the flow of water and other fluids. Founded in 1905, the publicly traded company has seen strong growth in recent years as more and more U.S. communities move from flat rate water fees to a pay-for-use model. In Chicago, for instance, about a third of homes now have meters installed – and most were made by Badger.

The Flow of Opportunity
With its long history of water-based industries such as brewing, Milwaukee – set on Lake Michigan at the confluence of three rivers – is a natural focal point for the new boom in water technology businesses. Among Badger’s neighbors are many of the world’s leading manufacturers of faucets, sinks and bathroom fixtures, as well as valves, pumps, heaters and filtration systems.

As the company has invested in product development and diversified through acquisition, Rich has relied on the long-standing support of BMO Harris Bank. “When we have an opportunity, we sit down with our bankers and explain our strategy. They always ask good, probing questions, challenging us to make sure we’ve thought things through. And then we’re amazed at how quickly they come back with an answer.”

Badger’s growth reflects increasing public awareness of the need to conserve a scarce resource; when people’s water is metered in the United States, consumption typically goes down by about 25%.

“The real story with our business,” Rich says, “is the greater good we serve.”

“What’s more, that positive impact extends beyond conservation efforts to a general economic revival in a part of the country that has seen many of its original industries downsize or move away. “We can capitalize on our strength in water technology to strengthen the whole region,” Rich explains. “Given the challenges the world is facing, water technology is a growth industry. If we align our businesses with government and academia, we can grow something strong here in Milwaukee. I want to create economic opportunity for my children, my grandchildren – for everyone in this region.”

People Who Work in Computers go to Silicon Valley,” says Rich Meeusen. “My dream is that if young people want to go into the water technology business, they’ll have to come to Milwaukee.”

Rich is helping make that dream a reality as co-chair of The Water Council, the organization he co-founded in 2007 with the goal of making his native city a global hub for freshwater-related research, education and development. The surrounding region boasts at least 150 water technology businesses, among them the company Rich has led as CEO for the past 11 years: Badger Meter.

One of only a half-dozen water meter manufacturers in North America, Badger is helping make that dream a reality as co-chair of The Water Council, Rich Meeusen actively supports water conservation in Milwaukee.
A Home for a Good Price

A young Wisconsin couple knew that the VA Loan program for military veterans would give them the opportunity to buy their first home – but it took a BMO Harris banker to get them the rest of the way there.

Room for Confidence

The Prices contacted Todd Bestor, a former Marshall & Ilsley banker who was pleased to be once again offering VA Loans since assuming his new role at BMO. “Working with Todd was like working with a friend,” Dawn says. “People told us that getting a mortgage was going to be a nightmare, but he made it easy. He explained everything to us and laid all the cards on the table – and then made sure the deal happened. There were no bumps in the road at all. It was awesome!”

For Dawn, the successful outcome was about more than the excitement of owning a home: “It’s easy to forget what our veterans have done, and what they’ve lost. Coming back from war, you have a lot on your shoulders. But with BMO on our side and Todd willing to help us out so much – it was a nice reminder that people do remember and care about you and your service.”

As the Prices enjoy life in their new community, they also have a strong sense of future promise. “The confidence that comes with being able to buy your own home means so much,” Dawn says. “There are so many opportunities that we have now. We can spend more time together as a family. And we can think about baby number two, because we have some extra bedrooms to fill!”

“Charles and I wanted this for so long,” Dawn Price says, looking around the house in Oshkosh. “We’re part of a great neighborhood here,” says Dawn.

Reserves and National Guard members and eligible surviving spouses as part of the GI Bill. VA Loans make it possible to buy a home with no down payment or monthly private mortgage insurance, and are subject to more lenient underwriting guidelines than mortgages usually require.

For the Prices, the opportunity to move ahead on their home ownership goals was a welcome acknowledgement of Charles’s service to his country. A combat engineer, he served five years in Germany, including tours in Kosovo and Iraq, followed by three years in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. Now he has a job with Oshkosh Corporation, a major manufacturer of military trucks.

When their son was born, his crib was a room in the Prices’ tiny apartment. They began making concrete plans to buy a house, knowing that VA Loan guarantee financing could make it happen that much sooner. But when they went looking for a bank that was certified to support the program, they couldn’t find one. “It was disheartening,” Dawn says, “to see how few people wanted to work with the government to do these loans.” After requesting a list of local bankers who handled VA lending, they found there were only two names on it – both at BMO Harris Bank.

Healthy Returns

When the public and private sectors come together to build a new healthcare facility, the design and construction challenges can seem less daunting than the financial complexities involved. A case in point is the new 180 S. Park facility, part of the healthcare network operated by the University of Wisconsin – Madison and one of the latest community-focused projects spearheaded by Ghidorzi Companies.

“A clinic in a neighborhood aspiring to revitalization,” explains Chuck Ghidorzi, co-founder (with his wife Mary Ann) of the Wausau-based development firm. “The nature of the project – along with its location, demographic impact and potential job creation – qualified it as a New Markets Tax Credit, BREWD grants, TIF, Midwestern Disaster Area Bonds… and the list goes on. “BMO Harris Bank understood the complex structure needed to make this project happen,” Chuck says. “They stepped forward with a team of experts who brought exponential knowledge, value and speed to help navigate the process.”

Across Wisconsin, Ghidorzi Companies takes on highly complex development projects with one clear goal: to improve the economic, environmental and human health of communities.
How Can We Help?

Having a positive impact on our communities is one of BMO’s core values. It says something fundamental about who we are and what matters to us, individually and collectively.

BMO Volunteer Day

Thousands of our employees across North America lend a hand at local charitable agencies on BMO Volunteer Day. Every year our employees are invited to “skip work, do good” and take time away from the office — during business hours — to participate in one of 6,000 volunteer activities arranged by the bank. The event unites our organization around a special goal: working together to help even the odds and improve the lives of people in the communities where we work and live.

Employee Giving Campaign

BMO’s community focus is also reflected in our Annual Employee Giving Campaign, which allows employees to financially support organizations they care about — in particular the United Way — through payroll deductions. Ours is one of the largest employee giving programs in North America.

Corporate Community Initiatives

Community initiatives that we helped fund in 2012 include:

- **United Way of Metropolitan Chicago**: This citywide charity provides job placements, middle school tutoring, primary care and crisis support for 1 million people.
- **Danforth Community Hub**: This gathering place in east Toronto, supported by a $1 million donation from BMO, helps more than 13,000 people every year through a range of programs, from settlement support to supplementary healthcare to early childhood education.

Employee Giving Campaign

$21.2 million raised by BMO and its employees for local United Ways and other charities across North America

35,500 employees contributed to the cause

76% participation rate — an all-time high

A Giving Culture

BMO Volunteer Day

June 7, 2012

6,490 volunteer opportunities filled

400 projects across North America

16,600+ hours of generous support

Opening the Books

In addition to promoting financial literacy, BMO also supports various childhood literacy programs, helping children gain the foundation they need to understand the world and share their points of view.

BMO Harris Bank

In March 2013 “Week of Books” campaign in support of First Book Canada, which partners with publishers to provide schoolchildren, mainly from immigrant families, with access to reading opportunities. BMO employee volunteers helped distribute more than 50,000 new books to over 20,000 children and young people in communities across the country. Each young person received three age-appropriate selections to begin building a personal library.

The initiative was an unparalleled success. When children receive these books, 99% of participating schools and community-based agencies report that the donated books enable them to strengthen their literacy efforts.

BMO has helped us in a significant way to reach many new groups,” says Tom Best, Executive Director, First Book Canada. “We’re also indebted to our publishing partners, and we’re overwhelmed by the dedication and enthusiasm of the schoolteachers, librarians and principals, along with community leaders, who are taking time to ensure their children get access to these wonderful books.”

Diverse Strategies

We’re more focused than ever on the hiring, development and advancement of diverse talent. Our newly established, executive-led Diversity Renewal Council is guiding the direction of that work, strengthening our leadership and putting strategies into action. We’re seeing results already. Here are just three examples from the year in diversity:

- Our new “Count me in!” initiative raises employee awareness of people with disabilities and shifts the way we think, manage teams and view talent to be an organization that embraces diversity and drives better performance.
- In the final quarter of 2012, the representation of persons with disabilities among our employees increased to 2.5% from 2.3% in the previous quarter, moving us closer to our 2013 goal of 3.8%.
- In Canada, Aboriginal hiring activity increased 20% to 76 hires in 2012.

Strength in Numbers

We’re especially proud of the advances we’ve made in female representation across BMO in the past year:

- Four women were added to the executive management committee, increasing female representation to 25%.
- We regained our leadership position among Canadian financial institutions in the representation of female executives — up from 42% last year.
- Encouraging potential was a focus in our 2012 talent round tables and appointments, and we identified more women in our pool of emerging leaders: 30%, up from 34%.
- The bank’s board published its diversity policy for the first time this year. It states that women shall represent no less than one third of BMO’s independent board of directors.
- We set a clear goal to have women represent 40% of senior leaders by 2016.

All of these efforts helped BMO earn the 2013 Social Responsibility Award at the Canadian General Counsel Awards.

Academic Goals

BMO Harris Bank learned up with the Elmwood (Illinois) board of the American Hockey League to promote literacy in local school through a reading membership program run by the United Way of Rock River Valley. In a campaign called “Goals for Grades,” we donated $20 for every goal scored during the 2011-2012 regular season at the BMO Harris Bank Center in Rockford. The total reached $4,140, which BMO then increased to $6,085.

Admirable WITS

BMO Harris Bank is a long-time supporter of Working in the Schools (WITS), a Chicago initiative that promotes literacy and the love of reading among young people. In the past year, we donated $50,000 to the program, and 60 employee volunteers spent more than 500 hours mentoring students to help expand their learning horizons. At the annual WITS Bank Book School Lunchbox in October 2012, the BMO crew was honored to receive the annual WITS on the Fox Award recognizing institutions that encourage academic achievement and foster the spirit of volunteerism.

* Data from 2012 Environmental, Social and Governance Report and Public Accountability Statement.

2011-2012 Social Responsibility Award at the Canadian General Counsel Awards
New School of Thought

On the campus of Aurora University in Illinois, today’s students and tomorrow’s teachers share a unique school environment where they can learn together.

“We’RE ALL STUDENTS,” says Dr. Rebecca Sherrick. “It doesn’t matter how old we are – we’re all learners. For a university, it’s about throwing open the front door and inviting everyone to come in.” This is a philosophy Rebecca puts into practice every day as president of Aurora University (AU), a private co-ed institution dating back to its founding in 1893.

To ‘up the ante’ in the classroom, the Au Institute is creating a STEM partnership of its kind in the United States, the program would be able to teach classes on campus and in the community. Rebecca believes strongly in nurturing motivation: “Imagining an American workforce where each person is committed to doing a better job on Wednesday than he or she did on Tuesday.”

One area in which AU could immediately add value was public education. Partnering with school and community leaders, in 2004 the university opened the Institute for Collaboration, where student teachers in AU’s education program would be able to teach classes of elementary students right on campus. It’s a program that benefits everyone. Students enjoy a unique learning environment reflecting the latest approaches. They also get a taste of the college experience and see the value of lifelong learning. And student teachers, for their part, get essential first-hand experience in the classroom.

Once the necessary partnerships were in place, the last piece of the puzzle was financing. It came in the form of a successful bond issue arranged by BMO Harris Bank, which now handles all of AU’s commercial banking. Today the Institute’s eight classrooms accommodate more than 200 elementary students from the Aurora public school system. And a 500-seat auditorium also promotes arts and culture on campus and in the community.

The next challenge AU has taken on is the well-documented U.S. deficit in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Backed by research stressing the importance of teacher preparation, the Institute is creating a STEM partnership for third- through eighth-grade students. Instructors will be teachers from area school districts who are simultaneously pursuing advanced degrees in STEM education. The first students. Instructors will be teachers from area school districts who are simultaneously pursuing advanced degrees in STEM education. The first of its kind in the United States, the program is envisioned as a model for other schools across the country.

“We have a log cabin on our property, but we built it years ago,” says Joe Whitsett. “That’s where we put our office when we launched this business in 2008. We had no overhead, no assistants, no salaries. It was just me and my son Tony, plus a copier and a printer. We stayed there for two years.”

From those modest beginnings, The Whitsett Group has grown into a 55-person real estate development company that builds, owns and manages affordable housing and seniors’ communities across Indiana. Based in Indianapolis, Joe and his team oversee every phase of the development process, from concept through leasing. They also provide specialized services such as green building design and historic rehabilitation aimed at drawing people back to downtown areas. “I’m a big believer in strengthening the urban core,” Joe says. “It will always lead to a stronger city.”

Starting a new business on the eve of the 2008 recession proved to be a challenge. As the full impact of the downturn hit the U.S. economy, commercial lending was severely curtailed. However, working in the fledgling company’s favor were two key factors: a massive injection of stimulus money from the federal government, much of it earmarked for affordable housing; and the backing of a financial institution that took the long view on real estate investments and had the resources to back it up – BMO Harris Bank.

Supported by commercial bankers with deep experience in blending public funding with private equity, The Whitsett Group completed its first two affordable housing projects and began pursuing additional opportunities. Public investment sparked its intended effect in the form of construction-related jobs. And across the state, the company helped communities gain new housing options for people who might not otherwise have been able to afford homes – while creating long-term employment in areas such as building maintenance and cleaning services.

The Whitsett Group’s partnership with BMO continues to deepen as the company looks to develop seniors’ housing projects throughout the Midwest. “The bank has been instrumental in our growth,” Joe says. “That relationship, along with our strong ties to equity investors, has allowed us to be successful in a difficult market.”

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The next challenge AU has taken on is the well-documented U.S. deficit in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Backed by research stressing the importance of teacher preparation, the Institute is creating a STEM partnership for third- through eighth-grade students. Instructors will be teachers from area school districts who are simultaneously pursuing advanced degrees in STEM education. The first
Innovation is the key to sustaining a healthy and productive economy. It’s about creativity. New ways of thinking about competitiveness. Better approaches to emerging issues like online security and climate change. Fresh takes on economic renewal. The critical first step is recognizing the difference between a novel idea and one that has genuine value. Next we gauge the risks of investing beyond the tried and true. And then we get innovative ourselves, making the process easier for today’s visionaries as they imagine where we’ll be tomorrow.
Imagine if your home could speak to you. The furnace could confirm that it was heating efficiently. The roof would alert you if it had a leak. A milk carton could sound the alarm if its contents had gone sour. What once was a sci-fi scenario is becoming a technological reality with the emergence of the Internet of Things—a network of objects, equipped with sensors and transmitters, that can communicate with us. A major challenge, though, is miniaturizing complex cements in the high-tech cluster around Waterloo, Ontario. Technology pioneer Terepac can produce devices with processors, memory and sensors that measure less than one millimetre square, are thinner than paper – and hold the key to creating the Internet of Things.

With Terepac’s breakthrough technologies, chips that are an order of magnitude smaller than current microchips can be “printed” onto ultra-thin flexible substrates – at a fraction of the cost. Since its founding in 2004, the company has developed a process to enable increasingly larger amounts of computing power in tinier and tinier devices. The result will be a new world of transformative smart products, from sprinklers that optimize water use to hats that monitor a wearer’s state of health. Linking these devices requires massive exchanges of data. Terepac is a leader here, too, developing networking solutions that will make it easier for devices of every kind to talk to their users and to one another. In the words of the company’s tagline, Terepac is “giving voice to the world.”

The Power to Transform
“We’re an innovation engine,” says Ric Asselstine, Terepac’s CEO. With co-founder Jayna Sheats, a Stanford PhD who serves as chief technology officer, Ric has built the company by partnering with innovative thinkers across the industry — and by attracting bright minds to its offices in Waterloo, Palo Alto and Dresden, Germany. “We know we’re onto something, and as people find out about us, they want to work with us. We seem to be a little magnetic.”

Terepac’s rapid growth also requires a sound financial foundation. After another bank declined to renew its initial R&D support due to a policy change, BMO’s commercial banking team stepped in to help Terepac at the crucial stage where major customers were interested, but no deal had been signed. “We understand that innovation is replacing traditional generators of wealth in our economy,” says BMO’s Alex McIntosh, who works with businesses in the high-tech cluster around Waterloo. “The market sees that our bank is extremely supportive in this space, and that drives opportunities.”

Ric stresses the value of that support: “Alex took the time to get to know us, to drill into the technology and the people, and he gets the vision. It’s like old-time banking – it’s personal.” And now, with major contracts signed and more in the works, the entrepreneur sees Terepac’s future unfolding within a larger success story: “The ripple effect of any transformational technology is stunning. We’re helping to transform job creation, cultural vibrancy, educational institutions and more. The prospects are very bright.”

Terepac has the opportunity to transform how customers interact with the world around them. “The physical world can emote,” says CEO Ric Asselstine.
A Novel Point of View
For Quebec-based aerial mapping company Aéro-Photo, building a successful business starts with having a unique vision of how customers want to see the world.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY has been used in mapping and surveying since the earliest days of aviation. But with the advent of digital imaging technologies, along with sophisticated mapping software, it’s now possible to create remarkably detailed and accurate views from above that are used in everything from construction and development to assessing mineral deposits to environmental remediation projects.

Canada has been a pioneer in the use of aerial imaging to chart and study the country’s vast undeveloped expanses. And for the past four decades, one of the recognized Canadian leaders in this highly specialized industry has been Aéro-Photo.

Based in Quebec City, Aéro-Photo offers a wide array of services, from aerial imaging and laser-assisted remote sensing, to topographic and thematic mapping, to the integration of geographic data into sophisticated analytical applications. The company’s long client list includes energy and resource giants, engineering and urban planning firms, public and private sector developers, and organizations ranging from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to The World Bank. In diverse projects extending across several countries, the common thread is a demand for precise, accessible information in support of major development decisions and policymaking.

Banking on Innovation
Known for its innovative digital technologies and production facilities, Aéro-Photo has contributed to the development of imaging applications that deliver more detailed information more efficiently than ever. “Our operations can seem pretty complex to outsiders,” says CEO Paul Grenier, a physicist and surveyor who bought the company from his father Wilfrid in 1974. “BMO has taken the time to understand our business processes, cycles, challenges and opportunities. The bank gives us great support, both in our operating credit facility and our long-term aircraft and equipment financing needs.”

BMO also played a role in Aéro-Photo’s latest business win: a major geographical survey in Colombia. “The bank really helped us in the proposal process,” Paul says, “suggesting several options to support our rapid growth and assist with equipment investments.” Buoyed by this new project, the entrepreneur expects to see revenue grow by at least 30% in the coming year – and keep on growing. “With our skilled and experienced team, cutting-edge technology and innovative approach, I foresee a bright future.”

An Overview of Recent Aéro-Photo Projects

Costa Rica: Comprehensive aerial imaging for a remapping of the entire country.

Afghanistan: Acquiring vital data for road and bridge construction in heavily mined areas where ground surveys are too dangerous.

CIDA: Training local officials to use geospatial data for development planning in Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Senegal and Venezuela.

Western Canada: Helping to develop control strategies for the largest beetle infestation in recent North American history, covering 18.1 million hectares of forest in British Columbia alone.

Quebec: Measuring terrain elevation and the forest canopy to generate better tree inventories.

$600,000+

Walk So Kids Can Talk, a nationwide event presented by BMO, raises thousands of young people, parents, educators, community members and corporate donors to support the 6.5 million children, teens and young adults across Canada who can benefit from the counseling and support services of Kids Help Phone.

BMO was a founding partner of Kids Help Phone in 1989, and over the past 24 years our employees have raised millions of dollars in support of the mental and emotional well-being of children and youth. In 2013, more than 3,000 of our employees registered for the five-kilometre charity walk in 30 locations, raising approximately $600,000 so far. Final numbers will be available in July.

“Being there” is an extraordinary promise we make to the young people of every community in Canada,” says Sharon Wood, the not-for-profit’s president and CEO. “BMO has helped Kids Help Phone become the leading Canadian – and world-renowned – professional youth counseling service that it is today. By taking this leadership role with Canada’s largest walk to support child and youth mental health, the bank is deepening its commitment to the well-being of every child from every community, whether urban, rural or remote.”
Advancing Innovation

Carbon-neutral since 2010, BMO has targeted another 10% reduction in emissions - against a 2011 baseline - across all areas of our business by the end of fiscal 2016.

Saving Our Energy

Carbon-neutral since 2010, BMO has targeted another 10% reduction in emissions - against a 2011 baseline - across all areas of our business by the end of fiscal 2016.

To Achieve Our Ambitious New Carbon Emissions Goal, We Will Continue a Wide Range of Sustainability Initiatives Over the Next Few Years, Including

- Buying Carbon Offsets
- Energy Retrofits
- Office Consolidation Strategies
- Reducing Travel and Working Remotely
- A Smaller Footprint

Driving Innovation


Arens has several development programs underway for hybrid and electric vehicles that will provide new revenue streams and fuel growth and employment.

Among its innovations was the production of the first hybrid traction inverter for commercial vehicles. "Our hybrid technologies involve some of the most advanced electronics, software and mechanical engineering in vehicles today," says Ken, who has been CEO since 2002.

"And that’s not the only green contribution Arens makes. The transportation industry leads the manufacturing world in minimizing pollution and waste. Virtually every material used in manufacturing must conform to strict guidelines about its impact and recyclability. It’s not just about being environmentally friendly – it’s good business."

Meaningful Dialogue

The economic downturn of 2008 was especially challenging for the vehicle industry. Arens turned to its bankers for help. "BMO Harris was instrumental in our refinancing during a difficult time for banks to take risk," Ken says. "They saw that we were a solidly performing company, they understood management’s capabilities and they supported us with the funding structure we required. They really came through when we needed them."

In addition to services such as treasury and foreign exchange, the bank supports Arens with capital financing for project development, as well as working capital to fund receivables and inventory. "The folks at BMO have put time into truly understanding our business, our customers and what we’re trying to achieve," Ken says. "That translates into meaningful dialogue."

As Arens continues to grow its existing customer base while looking for acquisition opportunities, the focus remains on innovative leadership, particularly in the development of more advanced systems for hybrid and electric vehicles. "Success comes down to innovation and execution," Ken concludes. "It’s about having the right people in the right places at the right time, focusing on technology, understanding your customers and what you need to succeed."
Right from the Start

At the heart of one of North America’s most dynamic technology clusters, Communitech helps innovative businesses launch, grow and succeed.

In the high-tech sector, a typical start-up only has a 45% chance of still being in business five years later. But for a growing community of companies launched in Waterloo, Ontario, the average survival rate is 83%. What’s made the difference? Much of the credit goes to a not-for-profit organization called Communitech, which supports the development and ongoing success of hundreds of entrepreneurial ventures in a region renowned for groundbreaking innovation.

Founded in 1997 by a group of CEOs of local technology companies – including major players such as OpenText and RIM (now Blackberry) – Communitech helps sustain the region’s technology leadership by connecting new businesses with the resources and relationships they need to turn promising ideas into profitable outcomes. Through mentorship and peer-to-peer advisory programs – as well as seminars, conferences and networking events – the organization serves as both an information hub and new business accelerator, assisting emerging companies with everything from talent recruitment to raising capital. And among the strategic partners who’ve been there from the beginning, keeping the community active and relevant, is BMO.

A Community of Interests

Operating in the Communitech space alongside professional firms, universities, government agencies and other partners, BMO offers on-site financial advice to both start-ups and established companies. In addition to helping fuel growth in the technology sector and the overall economy, our bankers work directly with entrepreneurs as they determine their financial strategies and execute their business plans.

Inspired by this close working relationship, last year Communitech chose BMO to manage its banking needs. “The bank has been with us since the beginning,” says Lois Norris, the organization’s CFO. “I’ve dealt with the corporate team for years, and they provide unparalleled service. BMO has been a strategic partner in many key initiatives.”

It’s this spirit of partnership that ensures the lasting impact of Communitech on job creation and economic growth. “The bottom line,” Lois sums up, “is that the network enables everyone to contribute and everyone to benefit.”

Five Years at Communitech

1,070 start-ups

$185 million in revenue

$350 million in total investment

5,260 new jobs created

Kevin Lynch, Vice-Chair, BMO Financial Group, has helped drive the global conversation on innovation and productivity through his writing, speaking engagements and consultations with business, political and academic leaders.

“Innovation is the ability to create new products or services, or to deliver existing products or services in new ways. Innovation is related to research, but they’re not the same. Research is a process by which money is transformed into knowledge; innovation is the process that transforms knowledge into money.

Today, though, most innovation starts not in research labs but with insights from consumers and front-line employees. Transforming those insights into commercially viable goods or services requires corporate leadership. To succeed at innovation, we need to organize for it, invest in it, manage it and create incentives to sustain it.

Innovation is crucial to the economy because it drives productivity – and a more productive economy grows faster, adapts better and supports more jobs, as well as higher wages. So increasing productivity through innovation is as much a social imperative as an economic one: it raises society’s living standards while making the economy more competitive.”

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We cannot simply measure growth in terms of sales or market share. For a bank, there is virtue in strong financial performance. But our responsibility goes far beyond dollars and cents. When it comes to helping ideas grow and encouraging self-sufficiency, our leadership matters. We nurture growth in knowledge and skills, in innovation, in the well-being of vibrant, inclusive communities – and above all, in confidence, which we work every day to sustain.

SUSTAINING GROWTH

A young girl counts her coins at our Queen and Hambly branch in Toronto, Ontario.
¡Haz la conexión!

Every August, Chicago hosts Make the Connection! Hispanic Business Expo, presented by the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (IHCC). BMO Harris Bank is a proud partner in the event, one of the largest in the United States aimed at Hispanic entrepreneurs and professionals, as well as employers focused on enhancing diversity.

Featuring high-profile guest speakers and a daylong program of business and career development workshops, the expo strengthens relationships between the state’s more than 45,000 Hispanic-owned businesses and corporate and government organizations. It’s the IHCC’s flagship event. Over the past 20 years, the Chamber has helped increase revenue among its constituents by an estimated $200 million.

“We're pleased with the ongoing support of BMO Harris Bank,” says IHCC president Omar Duque, “and with its commitment to helping Hispanic-owned businesses access much-needed capital and support to help them grow and create jobs in communities across Illinois.”

Grizzly Sighting

In the foothills of the Rockies, a visionary Alberta entrepreneur is turning tourists’ heads and helping boost the local economy at The Grizzly Paw Brewing Company.

Grizzly Paw companies to include construction and equipment loans, as well as operating lines of credit. “My business is complicated,” Niall says, “so it’s helpful to deal with the same person over many years – especially someone who understands the peaks and valleys of a tourist town. Christie is very proactive. She looks at the big picture and shows us how to get there.”

When Grizzly Paw’s expanded facility opened in early 2013, Alberta was again attracting an influx of visitors and new residents, including many who welcome the microbrewery concept. Niall sees his business as both benefitting from and helping to fuel renewed prosperity: “One of the hardest parts of operating a 'micro' anything in Canada is dealing with economies of scale. When it comes to buying equipment or ingredients, growth really helps. By increasing production, we’re not only creating jobs and purchasing more Alberta-grown agricultural products, we’re building an Alberta-grown small business.”

Grizzly Paw's new facility increases its brewing capacity by four times and will allow the company to further expand its product line.

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if you need to move a large volume of cargo in a single load—using a method that’s energy efficient, highly cost-effective and extremely safe—the short list of options is likely to begin with shipping by water. Since 1956, that’s been the secret of success for McKeil Marine, a Hamilton, Ontario-based company that specializes in customized cargo shipping and logistics support. Serving the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence Seaway and Canada’s East Coast and Arctic, McKeil provides a wide range of marine transportation services, including towing, ship docking, ice-breaking, salvage and marine construction. With locations in Hamilton, Port Dover (on Lake Erie), Montreal and St. John’s, Newfoundland, the family-owned company operates a fleet of 20 tugboats, 30 barges and various other vessels.

An Economic Success Story
“Marine transportation plays a vital role in the value chain of economic growth,” says chairman and CEO Blair McKeil, the son of founder Evans McKeil. The company has more than 280 full-time employees and indirectly creates hundreds of jobs in related businesses. This impact reflects a steadily increasing demand for services, especially along the eastern seaboard and in the Arctic. As a result, McKeil has achieved remarkable revenue growth—more than 100% over the past six years. And meeting the company’s diverse financial needs is a team of business bankers from BMO.

“Our partnership with BMO is founded on respect and trust,” says Blair. “The bank’s innovative approach is aligned with ours and helps facilitate growth. Customized financing has enabled us to expand and upgrade our fleet, develop the infrastructure to support our evolving needs and invest in our most valuable asset—people.”

The Greener Choice
In what is already regarded as an environmentally responsible area of transportation, McKeil constantly seeks new ways to lower fuel consumption and modify vessel design to minimize impact. The company is a founding member of Green Marine, which promotes sustainability in the industry. As an example of those ideals in action, McKeil’s nine-year partnership with Aluminerie Alouette has taken 50,000 truckloads of processed aluminum off the highways and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 200,000 tonnes.

The company’s social responsibility is also reflected in McKeil Cares, a program that supports community organizations that are important to its employees. And Blair McKeil’s personal philanthropy includes a cornerstone donation to the McKeil School of Business at Hamilton’s Mohawk College, which credits its benefactor with “honouring his father’s vision of a company that continuously demonstrates a commitment to people, community and excellent customer service.”

For nearly six decades, McKeil Marine has offered a reliable, economical and sustainable transportation choice in the vital Great Lakes corridor—and business is booming.
Professional Pride

For members of the BMO Pride employee resource group, being proud of who you are, what you achieve in your career and the organization you work for are all facets of the same story.

“In early 2011,” says Pia Schmidt-Hansen, “I was excited to learn about the BMO Pride group. From the first meeting, I saw the passion in other members and was eager to be a part of it.”

A senior business analyst in the Technology and Operations group, Pia has since been elected to the board of BMO Pride, one of the bank’s most active and widely supported affinity groups. “BMO has created an inclusive environment where employees who identify as LGBTQ feel they can bring their whole selves to work,” Pia says. “This makes for happier and more engaged employees. And it benefits the bank to welcome diverse ideas and experiences that contribute to better service, products and support for our customers.”

Community Connections

BMO Pride and its U.S. counterpart, BMO Harris Pride, devote a lot of energy to engaging with the larger LGTBQ community. For example, members participate in the annual Pride and Remembrance run, a charitable event associated with Toronto’s high-profile Pride Week celebration in late June. Other initiatives spearheaded by the group (which also includes many straight allies) range from organizing awareness seminars and event sponsorships to ensuring that customer-oriented programs such as Taking Care of Your Retirement include an LGTBQ perspective.

BMO Pride’s engagement with the community can also open doors for new business. For instance, the bank has long been the lead sponsor of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, a platform for LGTBQ expression in Toronto and the hub for several youth programs. When the theatre found its existing financial institution could no longer keep pace with its evolving needs, management turned to BMO as a bank that had always shown strong support for the entire community.

That profile will only grow as BMO Pride continues its highly visible sponsorship and fundraising efforts, helped by a growing number of members who share Pia’s enthusiasm: “Being a part of this group has made me proud to come to work every day. It’s given me the opportunity to network with employees in other cities and other areas of the bank that I wouldn’t have met otherwise. I now have a better understanding of BMO’s business strategy, and of the huge difference that employer engagement makes, both in our own lives and in the communities where we operate.”

Success Takes a Dive

In Newfoundland’s booming offshore oil industry, Pro-Dive Marine Services is expanding through innovation and investing in people – while helping to drive the local economy.

“Pro-Dive was moving into a significant phase of expansion,” explains founder and president David Squires. “We were looking for a bank that would be a partner and understand that our growth objectives in this technically specialized industry require foresight in financing and flexibility in short-term cash flow requirements. BMO understood our non-traditional business model and the unique nature of our industry.”

Growing the Local Economy

With the bank’s support, Pro-Dive has expanded its ROV fleet from robots used for observation only, to larger intervention vehicles with capabilities not previously provided by any Newfoundland company. Such technology investments have significant, multi-year lead times. The same is true of Pro-Dive’s investment in people and training, which has grown to meet the complex demands of offshore work.

As he continues building his business, David remains conscious of Pro-Dive’s leadership role in growing the regional economy: “We’re helping our suppliers expand and add to the skills of the local workforce – goals that can’t be achieved when goods and skills are imported.” At the same time, Pro-Dive has a keen sense of environmental responsibility, adopting eco-friendly diving equipment and using electrical propulsion systems on underwater vehicles. “As a company that interacts directly with the marine environment,” David says, “we minimize potential impacts.”

“Pro-Dive is always looking to reset industry benchmarks,” David says, “whether enhancing our service offerings, adopting ISO quality standards or acquiring next-generation equipment. To remain a leader, we’ll continue raising the bar in the coming years.”

BMO provided $2 million in financing for the locally built Pro-Dive Attender, one of a handful of such dive support vessels in the world.
"I REMEMBER BACK when we had six employees and faced one problem after another,” Rita Kress recalls. “Sometimes it was touch-and-go for cash flow. But through constant growth and diversification of design, we succeeded."

Founded as a modest family business in 1965, Kress Corporation today is a major manufacturer of mobile equipment for steel mills, surface mines and other industries requiring the transport of heavy materials. From its headquarters in Brimfield, Illinois, the company supplies machines to customers operating in demanding environments on seven continents.

Early on, Kress made the decision to align with Caterpillar, a world leader in construction and mining equipment, by making components that integrated with the larger company’s “prime mover” machines. More than 45 years later, that solid partnership helps Kress reach an expanding global network of customers—sustaining the vision of constant growth championed by company founder Ted Kress, who died in 2003.

“We’ve attained growth by producing the very best product,” says Rita, whose role from the beginning has been to figure out the mechanics of turning her husband’s vision into reality. “We know what has made us successful, and we’re not going to deviate from that.”

Perpetual Motion

A key contributor to the company’s success is a belief in seeking top-notch expertise, from legal and accounting advice to business banking. “The one thing I’d always heard about BMO Harris Bank,” Rita says, “was that once you became a customer, you stayed a customer—and I can attest to that. I tightly manage cash flow, and I’ve always tried to limit borrowing. BMO Harris has been instrumental in helping us pay off our debt. Since we switched over, we’ve never lost our momentum. And when an issue comes up, all I have to do is pick up the phone.”

The Kress philosophy of mutually rewarding partnerships extends as well to the local community, where Rita is involved in everything from water conservation to the Boy Scouts to a group called Forward Focus CI, which promotes economic development in the region around Peoria. As she sums it up, “It’s only right to help the area your people live in.”

As for the company’s future, the CEO has an industry veteran’s perspective: “In business everything changes—people, needs, entire economies. You have to be ready to constantly adjust while keeping your eyes on the road ahead.”

Heavy Metal

As CEO of the company that she built with her late husband, Rita Kress guides a leading global manufacturer of specialty carriers for processed metals and other heavy materials.

BMO Harris Bradley Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

“The BMO Harris Bradley Center has a net annual economic impact of more than $80 million in metro Milwaukee. It’s a tremendous community asset and job creator. When we issued a call for Champions of the Community to help build a bridge from the Center to the future, BMO Harris Bank really stepped up. This sponsorship will have a big and important impact.”

Tim Shelly, President, The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce

BMO Harris Bank Center, Rockford, Illinois

“Our partnership with BMO Harris Bank is more than just putting their name on the arena—it was and is an investment in downtown Rockford and a clear signal that BMO Harris Bank is vested in the revitalization of our city. The BMO Harris Bank Center is a great example of what can be done when private and public sectors work together for the good of citizens.”

Mike Dunn, Chairman, Rockford Arena Ventures and Entertainment Authority

BMO Field, Toronto, Ontario

“BMO Field is a great asset for the community and a leading example of a private-public partnership. It not only supports sports and its associated benefits, such as health and fitness, but also drives economic growth and development in the city of Toronto for the long term.”

Tom Anselmi, President & Chief Operating Officer, Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment

BMO Field, Toronto, Ontario
One Klick Away

Toronto-based digital marketing agency Klick Health has built an international reputation – and achieved remarkable growth – through its work for high-profile clients in the healthcare industry.

IF YOU ASKED THE TOP 20 global pharmaceutical and biotech companies what they have in common, 15 could answer with a single word: Klick. To get their messages out to the audiences they want to reach online, these industry leaders turn to Klick Health, the world’s largest independent health-focused digital marketing firm.

Founded in Toronto by a trio of partners in 1997, Klick has grown rapidly to become a standard-bearer for innovative communications in the healthcare sector. The agency offers a broad array of digital services, including custom web app development, content and creative development, e-learning course design and management systems, and website design, analytics and usability consulting.

Klick’s clients range from drug and medical device manufacturers to providers of diagnostic services and managed care. And while its digital solutions vary with each client’s specific challenges, the common thread is a need to engage and inform healthcare providers, who in turn educate patients on vital health issues and potential treatments.

Named Agency of the Year by two leading industry publications, Klick has won national awards for custom web app development, content and creative development, and usability consulting.

$5 million. But what’s equally important for the management team is feeling that their work has an impact. “It’s humbling,” says founding partner, chairman and CEO Peter Cordy, “to know that some of our programs improve how health issues are managed and even change lives.”

Success Fuels Success

Klick’s founders also take pride in providing a great place to work. Named among Canada’s Best Managed Companies, the agency has won national awards for being a top employer – turnover is less than half the industry average – and for creating an exemplary workplace.

Moreover, Klick is recognized as one of North America’s fastest-growing companies: last year the workforce grew by 50% to nearly 300 employees, including a new U.S. sales team.

This dramatic growth requires rigorous planning and a solid foundation – which is where BMO has been able to help. “Having a strong, reliable financial partner has contributed to our success,” says Peter, who as CFO has dealt almost exclusively with the bank since Klick opened its doors. “As our needs constantly evolve – whether we’re enlarging our offices, investing in equipment upgrades or expanding to the U.S. – we know we can rely on BMO.”

In addition to providing operating facilities for everyday business needs, BMO also helps finance learning programs and research-based initiatives. This requires an understanding of the pharma sector that Peter had found to be rare in banks. He also appreciates having banking partners who share the basic values that shaped his firm’s success: “Our revenues are approaching $100 million, but we’re still vigilant about keeping our attitudes and behaviours the same as when we were a start-up. It may seem simplistic, but we believe that the secret of our success is our clients’ success.”

Learning to Balance

Financial education comes naturally to a bank that’s in business to simplify complexity, provide helpful guidance and give customers confidence in their own decision-making.

Helping to improve financial literacy is part of BMO’s commitment to Making Money Make Sense. In communities across North America, tens of thousands of bank employees devote their time and energy to enhancing people’s understanding of financial products, services and concepts – whether we’re guiding first-time homeowners as they compare mortgage offers or teaching students how to balance a checkbook.

We aim for balance in our own approach as well, aligning financial literacy programs with our broader responsibilities as a well-managed business. In strengthening our employees’ ability to inform and advise, we have a clear purpose: to build customer loyalty and connect more effectively with particular kinds of customers – for instance, parents who are trying to educate their children about money. At the same time, we work with governments and community agencies to promote greater financial fluency among all Canadians and Americans. It’s an opportunity to provide leadership within our own industry while acknowledging the trust people place in us as a financial institution.

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The BMO Harris Bank intranet is gaining an added educational feature: the Financial Literacy Resource Center, which will offer a series of web-based learning modules designed to support employees as they develop community seminars and other outreach initiatives. The center will also provide webinars on best teaching practices, information about upcoming events, a directory of employee facilitators, updates on the bank’s various service activities (including those that fall under the U.S. Community Reinvestment Act) and recognition of employees who have made a difference in advancing financial literacy.

Employees participate in leadership training at the BMO Institute for Learning.

Employee Financial Education

As we reinforce BMO’s vision – to be the bank that defines great customer experience – our employees need to be familiar with the full range of banking options, supported by up-to-date financial information. So in 2012 we launched a financial education program aimed at enhancing our own capabilities and confidence.

Step one was a bank-wide financial literacy survey, which helped identify areas where we could provide employees with additional knowledge and support – both in their financial literacy efforts and in their everyday conversations with customers. We’re now creating a series of courses at BMO’s Institute for Learning to further develop employees’ expertise and capabilities. This online program, to be launched later in 2013, will be available to customers as well.

Financial Literacy Resource Center

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A Foundation of Strong Corporate Governance

BMO is committed to upholding the highest level of business ethics and corporate governance. Responsible conduct is necessary to ensuring the long-term sustainability and viability of our organization, and we’re proud of the way we do business.

We adhere strongly to the tenets of sound corporate governance – transparency, disclosure and honesty. These tenets are the foundation of our corporate responsibility strategy, and they never change. But governance practices must evolve as the economic environment shifts and our business changes. We continuously review, evaluate and modify our governance practices so they continue to meet our high standards – and the standards of our operating environment.

A culture of trust and good governance begins with our employees. Everyone working at BMO is required to read and act in accordance with our code of conduct, FirstPrinciples, which provides a framework for the behaviour and ethical decision-making integral to the work we do.

FirstPrinciples guides us to ask: Is it fair? Is it right? Is it legal? Asking these questions ensures that honesty, integrity and well-defined ethical standards are the foundation for everything we do. FirstPrinciples states that all BMO employees must:

• Do what is fair, honest and ethical.
• Respect the rights of others.
• Work to the letter and spirit of the law.
• Protect privacy and confidentiality.
• Deal with conflicts of interest.
• Conduct ourselves appropriately at all times.
• Be accountable.

Stakeholder Engagement

Our stakeholders are part of every decision we make.

Maintaining lasting relationships with our stakeholders is essential to the long-term sustainability of our business. We’re committed to working with our shareholders, our employees, our communities and our customers – understanding their expectations and interests creates opportunities for making our business better, and helps us achieve our vision of being the bank that defines great customer experience.

For a more comprehensive look at our corporate governance practices, please see our website, proxy circular, environmental, social and governance report and public accountability statement and annual report.

Compliance

Compliance is an essential element of a bank’s social performance. We have policies and procedures in place with respect to legal and regulatory compliance in all jurisdictions where BMO or our subsidiaries or affiliates conduct business. Compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations is a critical part of doing what is right.

Our compliance policies address security matters, including:

• the privacy of personal information
• information technology security
• whistle blower protection
• anti-money laundering
• corruption.

Contributions to the Community

$5,366 million adjusted total employee compensation

5.17 training days per employee

184 years: the longest-running dividend payment record of any company in Canada

$90.6* million total spent on employee training

$13.5 million in employee donations

83%* Annual Employee Survey participation rate

96 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill through our technology disposal program

2012 Highlights

A closer look at our year

BMO supports soccer, from young players in local communities all the way up to the professional level. In 2013 we announced a $20,000 grant to Urban Ventures, a non-profit working to break the cycle of generational poverty in south Minneapolis. The grant will support several initiatives including Urban Stars, a youth soccer program for boys and girls aged 3-19.

The program gives young people a competitive soccer experience while providing them with a safe place to play, learn and grow.

Contributions to the Community

$55.7* million total community donations

24% Hospitals and healthcare

15% Civic and community initiatives

28% Education

18% Arts and culture

5% Other

*Data from 2012 Environmental, Social and Governance Report and Public Accountability Statement.
Twenty years ago BMO published its landmark report of our Task Force on the Advancement of Women in the Bank. It was groundbreaking work – not just for BMO, but for corporate Canada. Tony Comper, then the bank’s President and COO, summed up the consensus: “The glass ceiling is now officially smashed.”

Two decades on, while we’re grateful to have been recognized repeatedly for being at the forefront in promoting diversity and inclusion, the work – and it’s work that all of us take on – isn’t close to being done. Promoting diversity, working at it and making sure no one falls behind requires a never-ending commitment.

For our bank, there was no more fitting way to mark this 20-year milestone than to renew our commitment to creating an equitable workplace. And we commend our Board for taking another significant step forward: BMO was among the first to sign the Catalyst Accord, an initiative that challenges Canada’s business community to increase the representation of women on corporate boards.

In fact, the bank’s Board of Directors, chaired by Rob Prichard, took the Accord further, setting an even higher goal for BMO and then publishing it in the 2013 Proxy Circular. And we’ve met our target: women now comprise one third of the bank’s independent board membership.

These efforts add up to far more than promoting equity. They’re about making progress – and it’s time to accelerate the agenda.