



STRATHCONA CREDIT UNION

NEWSLETTER

December 2003



Seasons Greetings from the President

I would like to take this opportunity to extend to all members of Strathcona Credit Union my wishes for a happy and safe holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year. *David Oram*

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

We will be keeping regular office hours through most of the holiday season in order to offer you the best possible service. We ask you to take note however that both offices will close at 1:00 p.m. on December 24th and December 31st. The offices will be closed all day on December 25th, and 26th and January 1st and 2nd.

We will happily take your calls or to serve you at the counter between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. until December 23rd, on December 29th and 30th and after January 5th. If you want to see us about anything that will more than a few minutes at the counter please call first and we will make sure that someone is available to help you.

QPAT TEACHERS' CONVENTION

It was good to see so many members at our booth during the QPAT Teachers' Convention--we are glad that you dropped by. Some of you used the opportunity to introduce us to new colleagues who became members and therefore are eligible to receive a \$50 deposit into their new account later this month.

A NEW LEXICON

Desjardins has renamed its Multiservices card. From now on we will refer to the card as the Desjardins Access Card. Of course, your card does not have to be replaced, nor is it any less useful--this is a change in name alone.

ACCÈS

Credit Union members are able to pay bills to more and more organizations each month. Desjardins now has agreements with more than 1,500 businesses and institutions which allow for regular or occasional bill payments by touch

tone™ telephone or Internet connected computer. Of course, transfer of funds between all the accounts in your portfolio is available also. And more recently, electronic funds transfer between your account and anyone else with a Desjardins account or a Desjardins VISA card has become possible.

And it is all covered by your \$1.25 per month general service charge.



CURRENT RATES

PERSONAL LOANS	8.75 %
CONSOLIDATION LOANS	10.75 %
LINE OF CREDIT	7.00 %
MORTGAGES	
1 year term (open)	5.75 %
2 year term (closed)	4.50 %
3 year term (closed)	4.65 %
4 year term (closed)	4.85 %
5 year term (closed)	5.35 %
TERM DEPOSITS *	
6 months	1.75 %
1 year	2.50 %
2 years	2.75 %
3 years	3.25 %
4 years	3.50 %
5 years	4.00 %

* \$2,000 minimum. Rate subject to change without notice.
Monthly interest payment less 0.25 %. (123)

TRAVELLING MONEY

If you are travelling to the United States during the holidays you will find one of the most favourable currency exchange rates in a long time. The perennial question is how the traveller can easily and inexpensively acquire those greenbacks.

All financial institutions build their expenses and profits into the spread between their USD selling and buying prices. For example, a recent market price of the US Dollar was \$1.29: Desjardins sold US dollars for \$1.31CAD on that day and bought them for \$1.27CAD.

Probably the cheapest method of purchasing US Dollars is at the local bank or *caisse populaire* before leaving. This ensures the best exchange rate with the fewest bank charges. (Note that many institutions require prior notice of the purchase of foreign currency.) This option, though, isn't the most convenient.

Travellers' cheques are another safe and inexpensive means of payment in foreign currencies. Strathcona Credit Union will provide you with travellers' cheques free of service charges (double signature cheques are subject to a small charge). Cheques are available in Canadian Dollars, Euros, US Dollars, Swiss Francs, British Pounds Sterling, Japanese Yen, and Australian Dollars. Call to let us the currency and denominations you require before you come to get your cheques. Unused cheques can be sold back to the Credit Union at the current exchange rate. The down side to travellers' cheques is that not all retailers will accept them and sometimes financial institutions apply charges when they are cashed.

Using a Desjardins Access Card at a foreign automated teller machine (ATM) is a very convenient way to maintain a constant supply of local currency. Look for machines bearing a Visa/Plus logo.



A transaction abroad using your Desjardins Access Card costs \$2.50, a fixed rate (\$1.25 in Canada). You can make two transactions every day, each up to \$500CAD in local currency. There may also be a charge levied by the owner of the ATM.

Withdrawals abroad are made from chequing accounts so it is best to transfer the money you will need into yours before leaving. ATMs work similarly in most countries but the keypads do not always include letters. If your PIN is a word, memorize the corresponding number sequence. (Use the 1 key for Q and Z; 2 for A, B, and C; 3 for D, E, and F; 4 for G, H, and I; 5 for J, K, and L; 6 for M, N, and O; 7 for P, R, and S; 8 for T, U, and V; and 9 for W, X, and Y.)

Desjardins recommends that travellers bring at least three Desjardins Access Cards with them in case an ATM, for any reason, doesn't return their

card. For more security, people travelling outside of North America should make sure their cards were issued after March 2000. Strathcona Credit Union can issue you new or multiple cards—call either office for details.

Some people use credit cards to access local currency when travelling: This can turn out to be an expensive practise. Some credit card companies are now charging currency conversion fees (1.6% to 2.5%) as well as cash advance fees (\$1.25 to \$6.00) and ATM owner fees. In all cases the withdrawal of cash using a credit card is considered a cash advance and interest is charged on it from the time of withdrawal until it is paid off. Using the rules of a popular Canadian bank credit card a \$500 advance made in the USA at an ATM 20 days before the statement date (when it was paid off in full) would cost, not including any expenses built into the exchange spread, \$21CAD or 4.2% of the transaction. Still, a credit card may be required in an emergency or for a car rental or, in some cases, is the only means of payment accepted—it has its place in your travel wallet. A credit card purchase is not subject to interest until the billing date and involves no cash advance fee but may carry conversion fees

If you must get in touch with Strathcona Credit Union while you are travelling in Canada call us at 1-888-350-5111 during business hours. If you are outside of Canada and must telephone us we will accept collect calls. If you must reach Desjardins (to report a stolen card, for example, call toll-free to 1 800 CAISSES from Canada or the USA. To reach their automated telephone service from outside of North America, dial 1-514-JACCESD (522-2373).



Your medicare card has its place, too, when you travel. Some hospitals and doctors in the USA will accept your card and the rate paid them by the Régie de l'assurance maladie but many will not and one must pay cash for treatment and seek reimbursement upon returning home. Travellers should also be aware that Quebec is no longer part of the Reciprocal Medical Billing Agreement with the other Canadian provinces and will pay only Quebec rates for treatments in the rest of Canada. The result is that many Canadian practitioners will also demand cash and leave you to claim for part of the amount from the Régie when the holiday is over. In all such cases, get as detailed receipts as possible.

Bon voyage