

HOOPP



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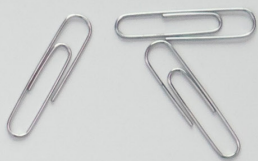


Using Tech to Deliver a *World-class* Pension Plan





HOOPP
Healthcare of Ontario
Pension Plan



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Raif Murray, VP, Corporate Solutions Group, and **Jennifer Williams**, Senior Director of Information Security, provide an account of HOOPP's cloud migration

Every business strives to be among the best in its sector, but only a privileged few manage to attain that goal. The Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP) is certainly one of them.

Established in 1960, the organisation is one of Canada's largest and most esteemed pension funds, delivering on the pension promise for more than 400,000 healthcare professionals at over 600 employers within the province of Ontario. Across those decades until the present day, the same spirit of innovation has permeated HOOPP's approach; it is committed to the journey of continual improvement and strives to remain at the cutting edge of technologies that can make it happen. More than this, HOOPP's five core values – accountability, collaboration, compassion, professionalism, and trustworthiness – emphasise a strong central message that it is a business ultimately driven by its members and their financial wellbeing.

Reflecting at a time when the pandemic is reinforcing the value of healthcare workers on a daily basis, Jennifer Williams, Senior Director of Information Security, states that it was actually HOOPP's enduring dedication to supporting them that drew her to join the company in 2018. "I really believe in the importance of our healthcare workers receiving one of the best pensions in Canada. I jumped at the chance to help deliver a security program that aligned with a very innovative digital transformation strategy."





Meeting Rooms

- Elm
- Oak
- Hemlock
- Willow
- Spruce
- Cedar
- Maple A, B, C, D

→ Lunch Room

← Members Area



HOOPP Promise Statements

We will be there for you to provide the highest level of service in a compassionate and courteous manner.

We will make certain HOOPP is solidly funded so that we keep our promise to you of a secure pension for life.

We will act in your best interest — we are HOOPP members, too. Whether we are managing investments or paying pensions, we will do so with care and professionalism at the lowest cost possible.

We will always strive to provide you with accurate information in a timely and confidential way.

We will have the right people, strategies and technology in place to best manage your pension.

We will protect your retirement — when pensions are discussed, we will ensure your voice is heard.



“I fell in love with the organisation's mission. Companies in the private sector are very financially motivated, but at HOOPP it's all about the members, all the time”

RAIF MURRAY
VP CORPORATE SOLUTIONS GROUP,
HOOPP

Raif Murray, VP Corporate Solutions Group, agrees with this sentiment; first and foremost, it is a pension delivery organisation and HOOPP's activities are singularly focused on one goal: delivering on the pension promise, which is to provide a secure financial future for life. “I fell in love with the organisation's mission. Companies in the private sector are very financially motivated, but at HOOPP it's all about the members, all the time.”

Coordinated between Williams' and Murray's departments, HOOPP has been engaged in a [significant transformation](#) of its enterprise digital technologies. This has been a journey consisting of four primary aspects: implementing Agile methodologies, shifting to a flat structure, migrating to the cloud, and incorporating a “work from anywhere” program. Never one for shying away from experimentation or prototyping, the company acknowledges that technology is becoming increasingly



1960

Year founded

**Finance/
Investments**

Industry

700+

Number of Employees

vital at HOOPP to support the delivery of a world-class pension plan. “If you are not in the technology business in the 21st century, what business are you in?” asks Murray. “Technology plays a very critical role, particularly in keeping our investment teams competitive in an increasingly challenging market.” One of the most important changes that has taken place is HOOPP’s cloud migration program. However, unlike others who in the last 12 months have done so as a result of COVID-19, Murray says that the organisation had already planted the seed for cloud in 2016, planned its execution over the next few years, and then implemented it in 2019. Subsequently, by the time the pandemic struck Canada, HOOPP had already moved “out of the data center business.” In total, over 1,000 virtual machines comprising over 250 apps, 350 terabytes of data, and 19 racks of data centre computing, storage, and appliances were migrated.

Other IT investments included Microsoft Teams and the Office 365 stack (rolled out across 2018 and 2019), which were developed with the intention of creating a “work from anywhere” program – a very

RAIF MURRAY



TITLE: VP CORPORATE
SOLUTIONS GROUP

COMPANY: HOOPP



Raif Murray is the VP of Corporate Solutions at the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, where he leads the organisation’s Digital Transformation and Operational Teams within the IT & Facilities Services Division (IT&FS). Raif has 25 years’ experience in IT and has led many teams across multiple industries. Prior to joining HOOPP, he was Principal Consultant with ObjectSharp and, prior to that, was VP of Delivery at Navantis. Raif is a veteran of transformational programs and has a reputation for improving efficiency and quality within organisations. His work at HOOPP has included moving the IT&FS division to an Agile and client-centric model.

EXECUTIVE BIO





prescient move given the subsequent operational restrictions imposed by the pandemic. This is not to say, however, that lockdown conditions were without challenges. “We had to switch from having an on-premises culture to remote practically overnight,” Murray adds. “But once everybody was set up it’s been business as usual for the most part.” In fact, the efficacy of the cloud migration was such that, when the plug was pulled at midday, nobody noticed the data centre was gone. Achieving a more agile operating model was HOOPP’s prize, and Williams is quick to highlight the security benefits it has brought, too. Providing advice and recommendations for action in a timely way, the security team works to expedite the delivery of technology.

“The cloud migration that happened in 2019 set us up for success in 2020. Our security program can now pivot much quicker and has been well-equipped for the transition to remote working.”

In total, the cloud migration took the combined efforts of up to 10 teams, a significant logistical challenge but one that HOOPP was able to carry off through teamwork and strong executive leadership.

Once cloud was in place, Williams says that the security team began examining the best way to transition from ‘on-prem’ infrastructure to a multi-cloud environment. Her team’s goal was to make sense of the new operating paradigm and search for innovation opportunities. “You don’t typically hear about security programs

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SENIOR DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SECURITY,
HOOPP

being innovative (because that implies a level of risk-taking), but in order to make a successful digital transformation you have to be comfortable trying new technologies, weighing the options with your team, and building a strong program with the right skill set.” The primary challenge, she notes, was how to monitor that security compliance standards were being met while operating remotely. Partnering with cybersecurity solutions provider Check Point helped resolve this by adding layers of governance to HOOPP’s Azure and AWS cloud environments. The partnership also created automation opportunities, which Williams notes could be used for detecting instances of non-compliance quickly and accurately. HOOPP would then be able to note any

JENNIFER WILLIAMS



TITLE: SENIOR DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SECURITY

COMPANY: HOOPP

» Jennifer Williams is the Senior Director of Information Security at the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan. Jennifer brings close to 20 years of experience in information security for private and public sectors. She has held various roles, leveraging her knowledge in privacy, risk management, compliance and information security. Previous to HOOPP, Jennifer led the Information Security Program for a large healthcare system. Jennifer is a leader in the equity, diversity and inclusion space and an advocate for women entering and growing within the field of cyber security. Jennifer’s passion is to help organisations and people understand how best to protect their information and systems.

EXECUTIVE BIO



HOOPP: A GTA TOP EMPLOYER

» HOOPP has been honoured as one of the Greater Toronto Area's (GTA) top employers of 2021, which recognises it as providing a good social/work atmosphere and strong health/financial/family benefits.

“HOOPP is absolutely a top employer in my mind. I love working here, the atmosphere, and how we collaborate as a team. We really give our teams the autonomy they need to be successful; they take things on and run with them,” comments Williams.

“Compassion is one of our key values and culture has always been the strength of HOOPP,” adds Murray. “We have a culture where it's safe to fail — obviously with safeguards, but with technology moving as fast as it is, you need to take some chances. I work with a great team of people across the organisation and we wouldn't have accomplished our goals without them. I'm very proud.”

misconfigurations and effect fast changes to reduce risk.

HOOPP's strategy is truly 'cloud first', and Murray notes that many developments are happening within operations and security simultaneously. “At the end of the day, our members' top priority is for HOOPP to pay their pensions, and they trust us to do that. A close second is trusting our ability to protect their data.” The organisation's transformation has helped move all our content onto online platforms to make it easier for our employees to access our technology securely without the requirement for VPN.” All of this development also has a much



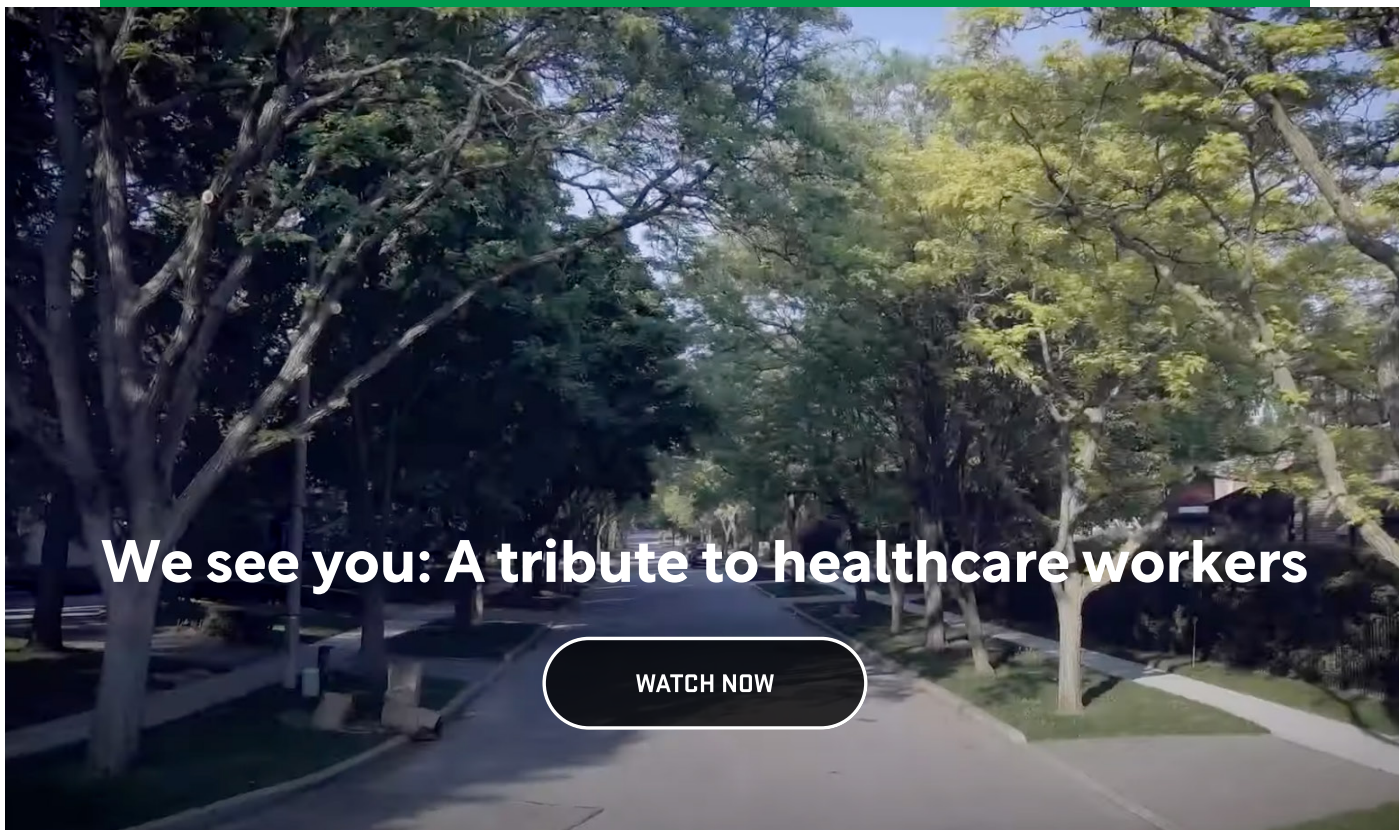
broader goal in mind: enhanced ease for end-users, leading to greater productivity among employees and therefore a better experience for members.

This isn't the only way HOOPP is seeking to improve the member experience - it has also invested in a new, more modern, fully integrated portal. "[Members'] feedback has been that, with the service we're providing through that technology, we have enhanced both our rating and the perception of our services," says Murray. However, he adds, the need to balance technology with efficiency and members' requirements is always present.

"We're not a massive IT shop, so the real challenge for organisations like HOOPP is finding the perfect balance between adding and maintaining so many different technologies. We're always searching for refinement and rationalisation."


HOOPP has a tangible sense of purpose and direction, qualities that subsequently guide the organisation when choosing IT partners and vendors. While looking for the most long-lasting relationships possible, Williams pointedly asks, "Do they share our values, does their roadmap align with ours, do they have long-term vision and are they able to keep pace with us?"





To ensure commitment to this shared purpose and direction, both the IT and security departments have developed concurrent three-year plans based on four pillars:

- 1. Intelligent innovation:** in partnership with others in the organisation, applying HOOPP IT's acumen, thought leadership and expertise to address their challenges and help them transform their businesses. HOOPP investigates which areas to invest in by first reflecting on the potential business benefits it will bring, as opposed to merely selecting tech that is 'fashionable'.
- 2. Drive data insights:** enable timely and effective decision-making across the organisation to drive new data and insights, develop capabilities that make them efficient and easy to use and unlock new opportunities through improved decision making.
- 3. Resilience and security:** facilitating the evolution of security by enabling automation that can improve response. The ultimate goal being to maintain a resilient foundation for strengthening IT risk management and ensuring the technology infrastructure is robust, stable and capable of withstanding constant change.
- 4. Invest in talent:** perhaps the most important of all. Murray: "we simply don't believe we can achieve the other three without [people/talent]" - HOOPP is striving to help its people acclimatise to the post-COVID new normal and all that it entails. As staff are the "first line of defense", their significance cannot be overstated. HOOPP is fostering collaborative teams to bridge subject-matter expertise, networks and technology solutions, and the business outcomes required for the organisation's growth and innovation.

A photograph of three business professionals in a meeting. On the left, a man with glasses and a plaid shirt is smiling and holding several yellow sticky notes. In the center, another man with glasses and a plaid shirt is smiling and pointing upwards. On the right, a woman with glasses and a patterned top is smiling. They are gathered around a whiteboard with several sticky notes attached to it. The background shows a modern office environment with large windows and ceiling lights.

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The latter point reinforces what makes HOOPP special: success doesn't belong to one person or department, but rather the organisation as a whole. "HOOPP is driven by our mission to deliver pensions to our members," Murray declares. "We strive to be a world-class pension plan and want to make sure that everything we need to remain in that position is in place. In this way, we'll constantly reassess ourselves and strive for more."

And so the journey goes on; as the organisation continues to innovate in its characteristic way, it will use the experiences of its members and staff to produce a better solution for everyone. HOOPP's skilled teams exhibit dedication, optimism, collaboration and perseverance at all times; they refuse to give in when confronted with a challenge and instead tackle it head on. "All of the things we've accomplished in the last two years have been the result of our very supportive and skilled teams," Williams concludes. "Without those great people working together, I'm not sure how successful we could have been." ○

