

The Outstanding Retailer Awards (ORAs) represent the industry's only independent awards program dedicated to celebrating the achievements of hardware, home improvement and building supply dealers in Canada. In its 32-year history, the program has honoured more than 180 retailers. ORA event details can be found at [www.oras.ca](http://www.oras.ca) .

 **Who can enter**

All Canadian hardware and home improvement retailers/dealers and managers who have operated their stores under the current ownership for at least two years are eligible.

**Who can submit entries**

1. Dealers may submit their entries directly.
2. Chain/buying group head offices may choose to select their best dealer(s) and prepare their entries for them, in collaboration with the dealer. There is no limit to the number of entries head offices can make for each category or in total.
3. Vendors, on behalf of specific outstanding retailers

**How to enter**

Fill out this form and send it and your photos (details on page 2) to oras@hardlines.ca. Entries can also be submitted by mailing a USB containing your completed entry form and photographs**. It is mandatory to fully answer all 22 questions for your application to be judged.** **Note:** All financial information in your entry is kept strictly confidential. Video material is encouraged, but not essential.

**Categories to enter:**

1. Best Hardware or Paint Store (any size). This entry is restricted to traditional hardware stores or paint stores that do not carry lumber or building materials. While your store may carry some convenience items in these categories, this entry is for stores that do not have a lumberyard.
2. Best Building Supply (under 15,000 square feet)
3. Best Building Supply (over 15,000 square feet)
4. Young Retailer of the Year (a store manager 35 or under; entrants may be owners or chain employees). Entries for this category must explain clearly the name, role, and achievements of the individual who is being put forward. Both soft and hard skills are considered for this entry.
5. Marc Robichaud Community Leader. This award is open to all store types. Its purpose is to celebrate the outstanding contributions/events, charitable donations, etc., made by a store’s staff/managers/owners to the community they serve. Entries for this category must share details and overall impacts of the store’s relationship to the community in greater detail.
6. Best Large Surface Retailer (over 65,000 square feet). This entry is open to any dealer or chain that has a traditional big box-style store.
7. Pro Dealer of the Year (formerly Best Contractor Specialist Store). In this category, your entry should emphasize your store’s relationship with its contractor customers. At least 50 percent of your sales should be going to pros.

**Photos**

Please provide a **minimum of 5 exterior photos**, and a **minimum of 20 interior photos** (there is no maximum).

* Photography need not be professional quality but must be high resolution (**minimum** 1500 pixels wide or 3 mb file size)
* Provide descriptions for all photos
* Exterior shots should include signage and a view from the street or parking lot (building centres should include lumberyard photos)
* Interior shots should include owner/manager and staff, view from the front entrance, power and other aisles, endcaps, in-store promotions and the contractor service desk, if there is one
* Video material is encouraged, but not essential
* Photo examples from previous ORA winners can be found here: <https://hardlines.ca/oras/ora-past-winners> .

**Submitting your entry**

1. Fill out the following entry form. It is mandatory to fully answer all 22 questions for your application to be judged. The text boxes will automatically adjust to fit your answers.
2. Submit a **minimum of 5 exterior photos**, and a **minimum of 20 interior photos** (see details above)
3. Submit your entry
	* Email completed entry form and photos to oras@hardlines.ca (use <https://wetransfer.com/> if photos are too big for email)

 **Entry deadline**

All applications must be in by **Friday, June 13, 2025.

Judging**

Judges will be looking for a variety of things, including excellence in customer service, overall store appearance, merchandising, marketing, employee management, community involvement and sales growth.

Please note that the overall packaging or appearance of your submission is not taken into consideration during judging. All judges are looking for is whether you have supplied the requisite number of photographs and fully completed all 22 questions in your application.

**Please put an X on the category or categories you are entering**

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| --- | --- |
| Best Hardware or Paint Store (any size) |  |
| Best Building Supply (under 15,000 square feet) |  |
| Best Building Supply (over 15,000 square feet) |  |
| Young Retailer of the Year (a store manager 35 or under; entrants may be owners or chain employees) |  |
| Marc Robichaud Community Leader. This award is open to all stores. |  |
| Best Large Surface Retailer (over 65,000 square feet) |  |
| Pro Dealer of the Year |  |

 **I would like to nominate:**

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| Store Name |  |
| Co-op or Buying Group(s) if applicable |  |
| Name of Owner(s) |  |
| Name of Manager (if differs from above) |  |
| Store Address |  |
| City |  |
| Province |  |
| Phone Number |  |
| Email |  |
| Website |  |
| Name of person who submitted this entry |  |
| Email of person who submitted this entry |  |
| Phone Number of person whosubmitted this entry |  |

**Please answer the following 22 questions about the nominated store.***Please enter your answers in the text box below the question. The text box will automatically expand to fit your answers.*

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| 1. Overview. Provide a brief (1,000 words maximum) personal letter from **the owner/manager of the store** that outlines the passion for his or her store and why the store deserves to win an Outstanding Retailer Award. Here, the judges are looking for some indication of why your store is exceptional and why your entry should be considered. This is an important part of the overall entry and provides important context to convey the spirit or culture of your business. (Hint: What makes your business a leader in its local market, what are your unique strengths, why are your customers so loyal?)
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| 1. History. When and how was your business founded? Has ownership changed hands? When?
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| 1. Growth. Please describe how your business has physically expanded and/or moved. (See also Sales Growth, question 13.)
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| 1. Size. Please describe your retail square footage, your storage square footage, and, if applicable, your lumberyard acreage.
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| 1. Business Environment. Tell us about the town/city you serve, your estimated trading area population, the major industries, the state of your local economy and the seasonality of your business.
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| 1. Consumer/Contractor/Institutional Split. Please provide percentage sales for each of these three customer types. (If there are “other” types of customers, please indicate.)
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| 1. Competition. List your main competitors and their distance from you. How has this affected you?
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| 1. Staff Count. How many full-time and part-time employees do you have?
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| 1. Training, Compensation & Retention. Please describe how you train; your employee incentives and benefits; and your success at retaining key staff.
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| 1. Mission Statement. If you have one, what is it? If you don’t have one, describe in a few sentences your business philosophy.
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| 1. Customer Service. Provide some examples of ways in which your store has recently excelled.
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| 1. Community Involvement. Describe any involvement with charitable organizations, civic events, sports, etc. (If you are submitting in the category of “Marc Robichaud Community Leader,” this should be the focus of your entry. Please provide as much detail here as possible.)
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| 1. Top Line Sales. Please provide dollar volumes of sales, and percentage increase/decrease, for each of the last five years (or as many years as in business). Please note: the information you provide for this, and the next two questions, is strictly confidential to the judges and will not be published without your express permission.
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| 1. Sales Per Square Foot. Please provide a three-year history.
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| 1. Turns. Please provide a three-year history.
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| 1. Are you selling online? If so, for how long?
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| 1. Approximately what percentage of your 2024 sales came from online?
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| 1. Retail Technology. Which system(s) does your store use and how has it improved your business?
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| 1. Marketing. Please describe your most effective marketing techniques, especially those that are unique in your marketplace. Enclose examples of newspaper ads, flyers and transcripts of radio and TV commercials.
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| 1. Special Events. Please describe them, whether they are recurrent or one-time events you have previously held.
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| 1. Extensions of the Business. Please outline any successful outgrowths of your core retail business. For example (but not limited to): installed sales, commercial sales, window and door manufacturing, truss plant, homebuilding, exports.
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| 1. Testimonials & Awards. Please provide some customer and/or business partner testimonials and/or copies of favourable correspondence that you have received from customers. If you have won civic awards, or honours within your own group, please specify.
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**ORA Winners will receive:**

* An engraved trophy with your store name
* 2 complimentary tickets to the Hardlines Annual Conference
* 2 tickets to the ORA Gala dinner to honour your achievements
* 2 nights’ accommodation at the Fairmont Banff Springs for Monday and Tuesday night of the conference (1 or 2 rooms)
* A marketing package that includes a write-up in *Hardlines Home Improvement Quarterly* Magazine, a customized video, and a professional photo ready to be sent to local media
* A complimentary 1-year Premium Membership to Hardlines, including the Hardlines Weekly Report, Breaking News, and exclusive discounts on other products

\*Please note that travel costs to and from the conference will be the responsibility of the winning store or their buying group.

**NOTE:** Even if you do not win, we value your entry and the successes you have achieved. We may want to use your store in future articles in our publications. By completing and submitting this entry, you will give us the right to include details or pictures of your business in future articles. (NOTE: all financial information you have shared remains strictly confidential and will not be included in any coverage.)