

Co-operative Spotlight

September 2010

An overview of
Saskatchewan co-operative sector
news and activities



31st Annual Awards Honour Sask. Co-operators

Please join us on Monday, October 18, 2010 at the Ramada Hotel and Convention Centre in Regina to celebrate this year's Co-operative Merit Award recipients. The evening will begin at 5:30 p.m. with a reception, and dinner at 6:30 p.m. with the award presentation to follow.

Each of this year's recipients have made an outstanding contribution to co-operatives and credit unions in Saskatchewan. They are:

Lifetime Co-operative Achievement Award:

Neale Morton
Grant Tyson

Co-operative Contribution Award

Myrna Bentley
Warren Crossman

Co-operative Enterprise Award

Consumers' Co-operative Refineries Limited

Co-operative Young Leaders Award

Ben Chung

Reserve your tickets by calling Saskatchewan Co-operative Association at 306-244-3702 or email us at sca@sask.coop. Tickets are \$52.50 and are available until October 8, 2010.

Farmer Direct Receives First Domestic Fair Trade Certification

Farmer Direct Co-operative Ltd. (FDC), a Saskatchewan organic farmers' co-op, is the first business in Canada and the United States to receive domestic fair trade certification.

"People usually associate fair trade with coffee, sugar, bananas and other crops from the global south, but fair wages to farm workers and fair prices to farmers are just as much a concern in industrialized nations like Canada and the United States," said Murray Horkoff, an FDC farmer-owner from Kamsack, SK. "Now organic consumers can purchase fairly traded, flax, wheat, beans, hemp, peas, lentils and other crops grown in the Northern Hemisphere."



Along with fair prices to farmers and living wages to farm workers, the *fairDeal*, an organic industry supply chain non-profit and product seal, was founded to incorporate fair trade, pay equity and other additional ethical standards into organic agriculture.

Source: CCA Newsbriefs, September 9, 2010

Celebrate Co-op Week!

Co-op Week is October 17 to 23, 2010, with Credit Union Day being celebrated on Thursday, October 21. In addition to the Co-operative Merit Awards, a number of activities are planned to celebrate Co-op Week.

CO-OPERATIVE FLAG RAISING CEREMONY & CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL OF REGINA LUNCHEON - Legislative Building, Regina

The Co-operative Flag Raising Ceremony, an annual national and provincial event, to proclaim 2010 Co-operatives Week in Saskatchewan, will take place Monday, October 18 at 11:45 a.m. at the Rotunda area of the Legislative Building. It will be followed by a luncheon from noon to 1:30 p.m. The guest speaker will be Dr. Lou Hammond Ketilson, Director of The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives.

If you wish to attend the Flag Raising or luncheon please contact Wayne Thrasher at Enterprise Saskatchewan at 306-787-0190 or email Wayne.Thrasher@enterprisesask.ca

SASKATOON CO-OP NETWORK LUNCHEON

The annual luncheon will take place on Wednesday, October 20, 2010. Details will be announced shortly.

Is it time to regionalize co-operative development?

Lessons from Québec by Mitch Diamantopoulos

Saskatchewan and Québec have long contended for leadership as Canada's most co-operative provinces, but in recent decades Québec's movement has boomed while Saskatchewan's has... well, lagged. While the number of non-financial co-operatives in Saskatchewan grew by a miserly 11 per cent from 1985 to 2005, the Québec sector exploded by 152 per cent. One key to closing this co-operative development gap may be to adapt and reinvent Québec's innovative regional development strategy to meet Saskatchewan needs.

THE QUÉBEC CO-OPERATIVE BOOM

The small, sleepy Québec village of Saint-Camille is not unlike many rural villages across Saskatchewan. Yet, its 448 residents have recently developed a home care co-op, a seniors housing co-op, a co-operative arts venue and a thriving agro-forestry co-op that produces non-traditional crops like ginseng. Thanks to the co-operative resurgence sweeping Québec over the last three decades, St-Camille has been revitalized as an innovative, sustainable and co-operative community.

Like Saint-Camille, the face of co-operation has been dramatically changed right across Québec by the success of a new generation of emerging co-operative sectors. Building on the legacy of the caisses populaires (credit unions) and agricultural co-operatives, 'new co-ops' in home care, housing, agro-forestry and the arts can now be found all over the province. But that's not all. From taxi services to housing co-ops, community clinics and restaurants to a worker co-operative brewery, co-operation is booming in Québec.

Québec's first worker co-operative ambulance service began in 1988. Today, worker co-operatives dominate the market outside Montréal and have shortened response times

QUICK FACTS ABOUT CO-OP DEVELOPMENT IN QUEBEC:

- Between 1985 to 2005 the number of non-financial co-operatives in Québec increased by 152 per cent
- In 2006, there were 184 worker co-ops in Québec, 65 worker shareholder co-ops and 172 multi-stakeholder co-ops
- There are 26 funeral co-operatives in Quebec with 100 service points serving 14,000 members.
- In 2006, funeral co-operatives had almost 14% of the province's market share, and owned assets of close to \$125 million
- Over 50 home care co-operative have been created in Quebec since the first one was organized in 1989
- Aboriginal people in Québec are three times as likely to form co-operatives as they are nation-wide
- Québec, with less than a quarter of Canada's population, accounts for half of all co-op start-ups in Canada

considerably. The Confédération des syndicats nationaux, a trade union federation, now provides financial and technical assistance to worker-led co-operative start-ups through its own credit union and a worker co-operative development unit. By 2006, there were 184 worker co-ops in Québec, 65 worker shareholder co-ops and 172 multi-stakeholder co-ops (known in Québec as 'solidarity co-ops'). Together these emerging new sectors, which involve workers as members, now account for almost twice as many jobs as the province's consumer co-ops. They employ a third of all employment created by the province's huge financial services co-operatives, led by the mighty Desjardins Group.

Similarly, funeral co-operatives and home care co-operatives didn't exist before 1990. Today there are 26 funeral co-operatives with 100 service points serving 14,000 members. By 2006, this sector already had almost 14 per cent of the province's market share and owned assets of close to \$125 million. In 1989, Québec's first home care co-operative was organized. Today there are over 50. Thanks largely to new models in new sectors that involve new constituencies and meet new needs, Aboriginal people in Québec are three times as likely to form co-operatives as they are nation-wide. Québec today accounts for half of all co-op start-ups in Canada – despite having less than a quarter of the country's population.

This new wave of co-operative development has driven positive change in urban, rural and Northern Québec over the last three decades. A network of regional development co-operatives forms the backbone of this dynamic, innovative and evolving movement.

HOW THE QUÉBEC NETWORK WORKS

In the seventies, the Québec movement was mired in gridlock and movement drift. Neither the sector nor the state wanted to put resources into movement renewal. Things began to change when the Conseil de la coopération du Québec (now the Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité or CQCM) resolved to rebuild the movement from its roots. Led by visionary President Claude Béland, the CCQ staged a series of regional meetings on the future of co-operation in Québec. This opened the door to new partners, new ideas, and new energy. From stagnation and division, Québec emerged as a world leader in co-operative development. One decisive factor in this turn-around is Québec's network of regional development co-operatives. Launched in 1985, it was one of several proposals to emerge from the CCQ's grassroots consultations.

Today, the Coopérative de développement régional, Québec-Appalaches (CDRQA) is the co-operative development hub in its region, drawing together representatives of local co-ops as its members. It has a staff of ten and a budget of about \$500,000 (\$300,000 from government and the rest from membership and service fees). Its staff complement includes two lead developers and

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dedicated staff for follow-up visits, communication, youth outreach, and promotions. This comprehensive approach has yielded impressive returns. Since 1983, the CDRQA has developed 245 new co-ops in its region, creating or maintaining 3850 local jobs.

Each RDC is required to raise 30 per cent of their budget, generally through membership and service fees. With these resources, each RDC plans activities like Co-operation Week to promote new start-ups. Their staff supplies technical assistance to co-operative entrepreneurs, builds the profile of successful co-operatives in organizational and public settings, and organizes small conferences, seminars and training focused on particular co-operative needs. They also support other regional economic development projects, working with public and private partners.

The RDC network now includes 11 regional development co-operatives, including the CDRQA. They service all 17 regions of Québec. Overall, these network hubs bring together over 1,000 co-operatives and other organizations committed to co-operative development. The provincial network now employs more than 60 staff. It has assisted the launch of over a 1,000 new co-operatives, and has created or maintained over 11,000 co-op jobs in the past 15 years. This system has proven a productive and cost-effective job creation instrument, earning the support of provincial administrations of all stripes. In fact, in 2010, the Federation estimated the average cost per RDC job was only \$4,000. Since 2005, the RDC network has been self-managed by the CQCM. It receives a block grant from the Province, and distributes funds to regional co-ops based on their job creation performance.

Described as one of the best co-operative development systems in the world, the Québec model has a lot to teach us in Saskatchewan – where we also have to address a rapidly shifting demography, sparse rural and remote populations, diverse regional economies, and persistent rural, urban and Northern development challenges.

REBUILDING THE MOVEMENT CULTURE

Beyond creating new co-ops and new jobs, Québec's regionalization strategy has also breathed new movement vitality into existing co-operatives. By anchoring a sense of civic purpose, the RDCs have helped co-operators renew their historic leadership role at the community level, and regain the regional development initiative.

While coalitions of investor-owned firms like Chambers of Commerce are driven by profit-maximization, these new co-operative coalitions express the wider needs and concerns of a democratic membership, and a different set of social and economic values. This co-operative development agenda spans multiple bottom-lines, from regional development to employment and environmental sustainability. As a result,

co-operation has become increasingly attractive to a wide popular constituency, including Québec youth.

Like the Wheat Pool field-men of the thirties and forties, who once organized countless new credit unions, retails and insurance mutuals in Saskatchewan, the RDCs do not simply place technical assistance at the service of struggling new co-ops, they help to build a movement culture. The RDC network mobilizes grassroots ambassadors at the regional level, drives community referrals and encourages member co-operatives to provide credit, supplier and customer support to emerging co-ops as well as to do business with each other. In other words, it creates a development mechanism that makes the principle of 'co-operation among co-operatives' more than hollow rhetoric; it makes it a prudent business-building, sector-building and community economic development strategy.

By building trust, information exchange and joint-action among existing co-ops, the local RDC development teams have been able to build strong local synergy for regional co-operative development. By building a sector-managed, state-funded provincial network of RDCs, they've also built strong state-sector synergy. In Québec, co-operators often refer to the importance of 'concertation' (concerted action). They also refer often to the 'co-production of public policy', in which the co-operative and public sectors work together to find new ways to drive new co-op development. Together the co-operative movement and the Province have built a comprehensive set of supports around the RDC network. Inspired in part by a study tour of European co-op development strategies, these include specialized financial instruments, co-operative promotions, and a policy framework of supportive legislation, taxation and programs to meet the unique needs of new co-ops, new co-op models and non-traditional membership groups.

Just as the field-men of the SWP once taught us – and the world – to build a strong, diversified co-operative movement by borrowing from diverse traditions (pooling from the U.S., consumer co-ops from the U.K., and credit unions from the Maritimes and Québec), the CDR network in Québec has much to teach us about rebuilding this province's movement to meet a more complicated and varied set of community needs and challenges in the decades ahead.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mitch Diamantopoulos visited Québec twice (first in 2007 and again in 2009), touring co-operatives and interviewing over a dozen Québec co-operators for his doctoral research on the co-operative development gap between Saskatchewan and Québec. He is a founder of Hullabaloo Publishing Workers Co-operative, helping to launch its prairie dog magazine in Regina in 1992 and Saskatoon's Planet S Magazine in 2002. He now teaches at the School of Journalism at the University of Regina, where he also serves as Department Head. He can be contacted at diaman1d@uregina.ca.



ⁱ Co-operatives Secretariat (1986). *Co-operation in Canada*. Ottawa: Co-operatives Secretariat; Co-operatives Secretariat (2006). *Co-operatives in Canada*. Ottawa: Co-operatives Secretariat.

ⁱⁱ 2006 Census

ⁱⁱⁱ Clement, M. (2009). *Co-operative Development in Québec*. Québec: Développement économique, innovation et exportation.

^{iv} http://www.fcdq.qc.ca/en/1_1_1.htm

^v <http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/ProvAndSectoralProfiles/Quebec-coopsapr08.pdf>

^{vi} Hammond Ketilson, L. & MacPherson, I. (2001). *A report on Aboriginal co-operatives in Canada: Current situation and potential for growth*. Saskatoon: Center for the Study of Co-operatives; Vensus, 2001.

^{vii} Clement, M. (2009). *Co-operative Development in Québec*. Québec: Développement économique, innovation et exportation. Census, 2006.

^{viii} Coopérative de développement régional, Québec-Appalaches (2006). *Coopérative de développement régional, Québec-Appalaches*. Québec: Coopérative de développement régional, Québec-Appalaches.

^{ix} Clement, M. (2009). *Co-operative Development in Québec*. Québec: Développement économique, innovation et exportation

^x Fédération des coopératives de développement régional du Québec (2010). *Portrait*. Retrieved from www.fcdq.coop/index.php?id=41.

^{xi} Fédération des coopératives de développement régional du Québec (2010). *Portrait*. Retrieved from www.fcdq.coop/index.php?id=41.

Canadian Social Enterprise Guide (2nd Edition) Now Available for Free

The Canadian Social Enterprise Guide was originally published in 2006 by Enterprising Non-Profits (ENP) and is a comprehensive resource, tool kit and collection of social enterprise stories in Canada.

The Second Edition of the Guide reflects the knowledge built up by The Enterprising Non-Profits program during its 10 years of supporting development and success of social enterprise through technical assistance and resource development. The Guide includes input from social enterprise practitioners, professional trainers, funders and organizational development professionals.

This guide is an excellent resource for both new and existing Canadian non-profits and co-ops thinking about creating or already developing a new enterprise or expanding/formalizing existing revenue-generating programs.

You can download the guide for free at ENP's website: http://www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca/guide_form

Credit Unions Top Customer Service Survey

For a sixth year in a row, Canadian credit unions have achieved the highest customer service ratings of all financial institutions in Canada, according to the latest annual banking awards by market research firm Synovate.

Adrian Murphy, vice-president of syndicated research for Synovate Canada, said in an interview with BIV that the unique relationship credit union members have with their institution is one of the key reasons for the consistently high satisfaction rates each year.

"Credit unions have an almost personalized relationship with their customers, who are, of course, members. The strong scores the credit union system continues to generate reflect the heritage and ongoing relationship they have with their members, in addition to how their services are delivered."

Credit unions also achieved the highest scores of any financial institution providing daily banking services for their in-branch services and the level of value credit union staff place on members' business. Source: www.bivinteractive.com

Leveraging Innovation, Identity, & Integrity: FEBRUARY 9 - 11, 2011

The 2011 Institute of Co-operative Leadership builds on 25 years of excellence, bringing together luminaries of the co-operative sector to foster, develop, and enhance leadership across the co-operative and credit union system.

Institute 2011 highlights timely topics as we approach the International Year of Co-operatives in 2012. Participants will take part in two and a half days of discussion, information exchange, debate, and networking. Join in thought-provoking sessions with practical applications, led by national and international experts in the co-operative system.

For more information, go to <http://tinyurl.com/Institute2011>

Health, Medical Benefits for Worker Co-ops

Members of worker co-ops belonging to the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (CWCF) now have access to health and medical benefits.

CWCF recently announced a new health and medical benefits plan for members, in partnership with The Co-operators. Coverage is available for both individuals and groups. For more information call 1-800-463-2555 or email memberservices@corpben.com Source: CCA NewsBriefs, Sept. 9, 2010

New Round of Government Funding for Innovative Co-ops!

The Canadian Co-operative Association is accepting applications for the Co-operative Development Initiative's Innovative Co-op Project (ICP) funding.

ICP will fund projects that demonstrate innovative uses of the co-op model. Examples include: co-ops entering a new area; innovative financing for co-operatives or partnership arrangements. Broad activities to be supported should contribute to: testing the co-op model in original ways; strengthening co-operatives and co-operative sectors; and generating information on best practices and lessons learned, or other information that adds to the body of co-op development knowledge.

This year's priority areas are:

- agriculture, including farmer-driven projects for value-added agriculture and biofuels;
- rural/northern community development;
- innovative goods and services, including innovative uses of technology; and
- capacity building and sustainability.

Funding for projects ranges between \$5,000 and \$75,000 per project per year and is available for both existing and emerging co-ops. **Deadline for funding proposals is October 31st, 2010.**

Guidelines and forms are now available at: <http://cccm.coopscanada.coop/en/innovative-co-op-projects/guidelines-forms>

For more details go to: <http://cccm.coopscanada.coop/en/innovative-co-op-projects/Program-information>