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## Committee report opens door for new dialogue between co-operatives and federal government

***Ottawa, September 18, 2012*** – Canada’s co-operative movement has called on the federal government to implement the recommendations of the Special Committee on Co-operatives, which tabled its report in the House of Commons on Monday.

Canada’s two national co-operative associations said they were generally pleased with the report’s recommendations and the committee’s recognition of the important role co-operatives play in the Canadian economy.

In the committee’s news release announcing the report, committee chair Blake Richards (CPC-Wild Rose) said:

“The sheer number and size of Canadian co-operatives make their impact on the economy indisputable. Co-operatives have proven remarkably resilient, and they are a key contributor to Canada’s economic recovery.”

The committee heard presentations from more than 60 witnesses during its hearings in July, as well as written submissions from co-operative organizations across the country.

“It is clear that the committee was listening carefully to our presentations, and we would like to thank them for all their hard work on this report. We are very pleased with the recommendations,” said Denyse Guy, executive director of the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA). “We still have concerns about the need to find new ways to help with the development of new and emerging co-operatives, and look forward to working with the government on these issues.”

“We are very happy that the parliamentarians heard our call for a renewed dialogue between the government and co-operative enterprises,” said Brigitte Gagné, executive director of the Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité (CCCM). “We hope the committee’s recommendations will be implemented quickly, particularly during these uncertain economic times.”

CCA and CCCM are particularly happy with a recommendation that the government consider consolidating federal responsibility for co-operatives under a suitable department, such as Industry Canada. Responsibility for non-financial co-operatives currently lies with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the co-operative movement has argued that Industry would be a better fit.

Other recommendations of the report included that the government explore the feasibility of allowing Canadians to invest RRSP funds in co-operatives; that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation continue to provide support for housing co-operatives; and that the government educate its employees and the public about the nature and benefits of the co-operative business model.

The Special Committee was created in recognition of the 2012 International Year of Co-operatives, which was proclaimed by the United Nations to recognize the contribution co-operatives make to the social and economic development of communities around the world.

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