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For immediate release

## **Co-op leaders give green light for creation of a new bilingual national association representing co-operatives across Canada**

***Edmonton, June 29, 2013 – Delegates from Canada’s two national co-operative associations have voted strongly in favour of creating a single bilingual organization to represent co-ops, credit unions and mutual insurance companies in every region of Canada . The decision is considered historic because it brings together English- and French-speaking co-operators, who have been largely divided along linguistic lines since the birth of the Canadian co-operative movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.***

When the new organization, tentatively named Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada, is launched in early 2014, it will take over the domestic mandates of both the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) and the Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité (CCCM). CCA will continue to exist, but it will be only be responsible for international co-operative development activities.

“This is not a merger, it is the creation of an entirely new organization to represent all co-operative enterprises across Canada,” said Bill Dobson, the newly-elected president of CCA. “This will significantly strengthen the Canadian co-operative movement; it will allow co-operatives, credit unions and mutuals to speak with one voice, in both of Canada’s official languages.”

“I am so proud to see all Canadian co-operators unite to finally create a single organization,” said Denis Richard, the newly-elected president of CCCM. “From now on, all co-operators – anglophone, francophone and from other cultures – will work together to build on our collective heritage and create a stronger co-operative movement in Canada for the future.”

### ***A well-attended Congress***

The vote on the new organization took place during the joint Congress of CCA and CCCM, which took place in Edmonton from June 26-28. Using the theme *Sharing our successes; building the future*, the Congress gave more than 200 co-operators from across Canada an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience and reflect on how to implement a plan for a “co-operative decade” in Canada. They also had an opportunity to hear from such speakers as MP Mauril Bélanger, the Liberal Party’s advocate for co-operatives in the House of Commons, and Iain Stewart, an assistant deputy minister at Industry Canada.

The two associations also honoured eight individuals and co-operatives for outstanding contributions to the Canadian co-operative movement.

Melanie Conn, a consultant, educator and director of Common Thread , a Vancouver-based co-operative which creates tote bags and other items out of recycled street banners, received CCA’s Canadian Co-operative Achievement Award, while Saskatchewan-based credit union consultant Bev Maxim, who has been actively involved in CCA’s international development program, received the Global Co-operator Award.

The late Bill Halpenny, who worked for many years in the Manitoba credit union movement, was inducted into the Canadian Co-operative Hall of Fame as a Pioneer Inductee. CCA awards for excellence in co-operative governance were presented to Mountain Equipment Co-op, Coastal Community Credit Union and UFA Co-operative Limited.

CCCM presented its highest honour, the Ordre du mérite coopérative et mutualiste, to Quebec social economy leader Léopold Beaulieu, president and CEO of Fondation and president of CIRIEC, an international social economy research organization; and Claudie Deveau of Cheticamp, NS, who has been a leader in the co-operative movement in Cape Breton Island for the past 40 years.

### ***Co-operatives in Canada***

Canada's 9,000 co-operatives have more than 18 million members and 150,000 employees. They generate annual revenues of more than \$50 billion and have assets of more than \$370 billion. Canadian co-operatives are represented by two national associations, the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) and the Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité. (CCCM).

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#### **For more information, contact:**

Donna Balkan  
Communications Manager  
Canadian Co-operative Association  
613-238-6711, ext. 206  
Cell: 613-314-1032  
[donna.balkan@coopscanada.coop](mailto:donna.balkan@coopscanada.coop)

Visit our website at [www.coopscanada.coop](http://www.coopscanada.coop).

Michaël Béland  
Director of communications and programs  
Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité  
613-789-5492, ext. 24  
Cell: 613-265-7579  
[michael@cccm.coop](mailto:michael@cccm.coop)

Visit our website at [www.cccm.coop](http://www.cccm.coop)