



A century of co-operation: celebrating the 100th anniversary of Canada's co-operative movement

Ottawa, January 7, 2009 – Co-operatives, credit unions and their members across the country are celebrating the 100th anniversary this year of what has now become one of Canada's largest economic and social movements.

Canada's first national co-operative association, the Co-operative Union of Canada (CUC), was formed in Hamilton, Ontario on March 6, 1909 to encourage sharing of information, mutual self-help and concerted action among Canadian co-operatives. In 1987, the CUC merged with the co-operative movement's educational arm, the Co-operative College of Canada to create the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA).

Today, there are some 8,800 co-operatives and credit unions across Canada. Collectively, they have more than 17 million memberships, over \$275 billion in assets and employ more than 150,000 people. Co-operatives differ from traditional businesses in that they are owned by the members who use their services and are driven by social as well as economic concerns. Some of Canada's best-known co-operatives include Mountain Equipment Co-op, Canada's leading supplier of quality outdoor gear and clothing, Gay Lea Foods, a major producer of dairy products owned by more than 1,200 Ontario farmers, and The Co-operators (insurance) Group, as well as Federated Co-operatives Limited and Co-op Atlantic, two of Canada's largest co-operative retail operations.

"Co-ops are one of Canada's greatest success stories," said CCA Executive Director Carol Hunter. "They have played an enormous role in building the country we have today and are an important part of the economies of both rural and urban communities. They make a significant contribution to the social needs of Canadians in such areas as child care and affordable housing, as well as to more traditional areas of the economy, such as banking, insurance and retail."

"You can be born in a health care co-op and buried by a funeral co-op. In between you can work in a worker's co-op, live in a housing co-op, buy your groceries, clothing and other items from retail co-ops, send your children to a child care co-op, do all your banking at a credit union, and purchase your insurance from an insurance co-op."

Ms. Hunter said co-operatives are part of the solution to revitalizing Canada's economy.

"The history of co-ops shows us that they were often formed during hard economic times, so they are as relevant today as they have ever been," she said. "Since most co-ops are locally-based, they not only provide jobs, but also generate wealth which remains in the community."

She said CCA hopes to use the anniversary year to help educate Canadians on the role co-operatives have played – and continue to play – in the social and economic life of our country.

Some of the activities aimed at celebrating CCA's 100th anniversary include:

- The creation of a virtual Canadian Co-operative Hall of Fame, which will honour individuals who have made a significant contribution to Canada's co-operative movement.
- The publication of *A Century of Co-operation*, a commemorative book on the history of the CCA and co-operatives in Canada by Ian MacPherson, Professor Emeritus in History and founding director of the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies at the University of Victoria.
- The 2009 CCA Congress, which will take place in Ottawa from June 16-19 and highlight the anniversary year. The Congress will feature high-profile speakers on co-operatives and the economy, as well as panels, workshops and other activities.

More information on CCA's 100th anniversary is available on the CCA web site at www.coopscanada.coop.

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Contact:

Donna Balkan, Communications Manager
Canadian Co-operative Association
613-238-6711, ext. 206
Cell: 613-314-1032
communications@coopscanada.coop

The Canadian Co-operative Association is a national association for co-operatives in Canada, representing more than nine million co-operative and credit union members from over 2,000 organizations. CCA members come from many sectors of the economy, including finance, insurance, agri-food and supply, wholesale and retail, housing, health and the service sector. CCA provides leadership to promote, develop, and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world.