



NEWS AND VIEWS

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ACCA *News and Views* will be published at the beginning of each month. Please submit news items or information you would like to share to acca@acca.coop.

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ACCA Member Profile: The Co-operators Group



Corporate Profile

The Co-operators is owned and controlled by 40 member owners, comprised of co-operatives, credit unions and like-minded organizations. The Co-operators:

- is the largest Canadian owned, multi-product insurer
- has assets over \$5 billion
- has 4,000 staff and 450 exclusive agents
- distributes products and services through 700 outlets, 920 independent brokers and three call centres
- protects over 675,000 homes, 1 million vehicles and 514,000 lives
- insures 250,000 employees through group benefit plans
- provides coverage to 45,600 farms and 119,800 businesses
- provides travel insurance to 1 million Canadians and visitors to Canada
- offers a wide range of wealth management products including mutual funds
- provides investment and real estate management services

Alberta Profile

The Co-operators Group is the largest general insurance company in Alberta with over \$250 million in annual sales. With 120 offices throughout the province, we are well represented in most Alberta communities. Throughout this network, we protect 240,000 drivers, 100,000 homeowners, 23,000 farms, and 14,000 businesses in the province.



ACCA Announces Co-Op Development Grant Opportunity

The Alberta Community & Co-operative Association is again offering co-op advisory services grants (to a maximum of \$1,500) for 2008–09. The grants are available for both developing and existing co-ops and are designed to be used for advisory services support such as feasibility studies, consultant expertise, business plans, learning exchanges or other non-capital expenditures that enhance the development of your co-op.

The grant deadline is June 30, 2008.

The Application Form and Guide are available on our website: www.acca.coop. For further information, contact our Director of Co-op Development, Carol Murray, at accainfo@telus.net or 780.963.3766.

ACCA Summer Co-operative Youth Program Still Accepting Registrations

Registrations for the 2008 ACCA Summer Co-operative Youth Program are still being accepted; however space is becoming limited. If you still wish to register, a participant registration form can be found on [our website](#), or contact the ACCA office at 780.963.3766. Please check with the ACCA Office with regard to program openings.

ACCA Seeks Facilitators for Co-Op Development Outreach Team

ACCA is currently seeking those with strong co-op experience (for example, those who have worked in co-op development, lived in a housing co-operative, have co-op board experience, have taken co-op governance or management workshops, etc.) to provide co-op outreach to developing co-op groups. We are looking for individuals who can work in an advisory capacity with newly forming groups to support them through to the pre-feasibility stage of co-op development by answering questions, guiding the process, leading an outreach presentation workshop, facilitating a self-assessment process and providing appropriate resources for further development.

ACCA will provide an outreach PowerPoint presentation (which facilitators would customize for each group), other support and resource materials and a teleconference orientation session. However, outreach facilitators must be able to work independently. Depending on the requirements of the developing co-op group, facilitators will be paid \$250 to \$500 for outreach services provided to each group. As our resources are limited, ACCA cannot cover travel or other expenses. ACCA currently provides 10-15 outreaches per year, many of them during the day but some in the evenings or on weekends (this would be negotiated with the group). Some of the outreach will be by email and telephone, although some sessions will be in-person. These opportunities will be rotated through the team of facilitators, depending on availability, geographic location and suitability of the experience and background of the facilitator to the needs of the group.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please send a resumé and cover letter to Carol Murray, Director of Co-op Development, at accainfo@telus.net. Extended deadline for applications is June 15, 2008. The orientation session will be held in mid- to late-June.

Alberta Co-operative Merit Award

Further to the profile included in the May issue of *News and Views* regarding the 2008 Co-operative Merit Award recipient, Fred Lyczewski is also a long standing member of Central Alberta REA. This important affiliation was missed from the announcement.

City's Cornerstones Plan creates 379 affordable housing units

A City of Edmonton news release from April 28 announced 2007–2008 Cornerstones funded projects totaling \$33.8 million for 379 affordable housing units. Two of the projects are built by the NACHA and Sundance Housing co-operatives. The news release and details of these two projects may be found on [our website](#).



Meetings

June 12 to 14: [Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada](#) Annual General Meeting, Toronto, ON. Award-winning author [Thomas Homer-Dixon](#) will be the keynote speaker thanks to sponsorship by [The Co-operators](#).

For information, go to www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/agm.asp.

Call For CDI Innovations and Research Proposals

The five-year Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI), which expired on March 31, 2008, has been renewed for a one-year transitional period while the federal, provincial and territorial governments negotiate a new Agricultural Policy Framework, which includes the CDI program. Advisory Services will continue as before.

There has been an important change in the operation of the Innovations and Research (I&R) component of the program. The application process is being managed this year by the [Canadian Co-operative Association](#) and the [Conseil Canadien de la Coopération](#) while the financial administration and contracting will continue with the [Co-operatives Secretariat](#).

CCA and CCC are now seeking proposals for projects to research and test innovative ways of using the co-operative model. For information, call Mark Goldblatt at 613.238.6711, ext. 205.

Deadlines for submission of proposals and expenditure of funds:

- No applications will be accepted after June 9.
- All project activities to be funded under the CDI I&R in 2008–09 must be completed by March 31, 2009.

Ontario Central's Youth Awareness Video Now on YouTube

[Credit Union Central of Ontario](#)'s Youth Awareness Video, which premiered at its annual general meeting earlier this year, is now available on [YouTube](#). The video was produced by a team at Ontario Central as a promotional tool to show that the values of credit unions are aligned with those of the younger generation. The team took a grassroots approach to explaining the credit union system by travelling the province to interview university students, members, and employees in the system between the ages of 18 and 25 years.

Alternative Financing for Community-Based Projects

The Canadian Alternative Investment Co-operative (CAIC) launched an ambitious outreach campaign in the fall of 2007 with the stated goal of advancing an additional \$2 million to non-profits, co-operatives and community economic development organizations that are making a positive social impact on the Canadian landscape. To date, CAIC's campaign is on track with nearly \$1 million in new loans to projects across Canada and is looking to meet (and potentially exceed) the \$2 million target.

For more information about the [three streams of financing available](#), [the application process](#) and [FAQ's](#) check out CAIC's website at www.caic.ca or contact Valerie Lemieux and Beth Coates at caic@caic.ca or 416.467.7797.

Please submit your application by e-mail to idc-cdi@ccc.coop. If you prefer, you may send it by regular mail or courier to CDI I&R Program, 275 Bank Street, Suite 400, Ottawa, ON K2P 2L6; or by fax to (613) 567-0658.

Co-Operative World Fair — ICA Expo 2008

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, go to the website at www.icaexpo.coop.

The [International Co-operative Alliance](#) (ICA) is organizing the first official fair of co-operative businesses. Held in Lisbon Portugal, October 23 to 25, EXPO 2008 will give co-ops worldwide the opportunity to showcase the economic potential of the movement. “The Co-operative World Fair will showcase the trade of co-operative products and services, and facilitate international business connections,” says Luiz Branco, the Fair’s chairman.

Two National Co-Op Associations Join Forces for Co-Operation Without Limits – June 25–27, Winnipeg

More information is available on the [CCA website](#).

The [Canadian Co-operative Association](#) and the [Conseil Canadien de la Coopération](#), the two national associations of the co-operative movement in Canada, are working in partnership to organize a national Congress in Winnipeg, from June 25 – 27, 2008. The theme of the Congress is Co-operation without Limits / Coopération sans limite and builds upon the closer working relationship of the two associations. The Congress will open with a National Youth Forum on June 25 and will close with the AGMs of both organizations on Friday June 27.

A full day (June 26) will be devoted to an Open Forum that will provide the first opportunity for many members of both national associations to come together to share experiences and common views on how to grow and strengthen the movement. The session will explore common topics that affect and influence the co-operative movement and seek to identify opportunities for closer working partnerships. A blend of facilitated discussion, keynote presentations and audience participation will be key ingredients in making the Open Forum a productive and thought-provoking discussion. Themes that will be addressed include promoting the co-op image in a unified manner, co-operative development, and alliances within the movement.

CCA Says “Product of Canada” Label Should Apply Only to Ingredients

On April 29, Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) Director of Government Affairs John Anderson along with Lynne Markell, Government Affairs Policy Advisor made a presentation before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on Product of Canada labelling. CCA joined many farm and consumer groups calling for the use of “Product of Canada” only when a majority of ingredients or raw materials come from Canadian sources. The federal labelling policy allowed food companies to put the “Product of Canada” tag on a food and beverage product if 51% of the production costs – including labour, transportation and packaging – occurred in Canada. This means it is possible to import the food ingredients and call it a “Product of Canada”. The presentation also suggested a better system for listing the country of origin for the major ingredients or raw materials used in all processed food sold in Canada, and a revised grading system whereby only products that meet the Product of Canada criteria can use “Canada” in their grade name. [Click here to download CCA’s presentation.](#)

On May 21, 2008, Prime Minister Harper introduced new labelling guidelines. Now a “Made in Canada” label will mean that virtually all the contents are Canadian in origin.



Green Certificate Employment Directory to Connect Agriculture Employers and Workers through Free, Online Service

The Green Certificate Program recently launched its Green Certificate Employment Directory, a free, online service which connects agriculture employers with job seekers who already have high demand skills in agribusiness. You can use the new service by visiting www.agriculture.alberta.ca/GCED

The Green Certificate is an industry-driven, apprenticeship-style training program that was introduced in 1975. Every day, thousands of Green Certificate trainees are out and about in Alberta's barns, fields and corrals getting their hands dirty under the supervision of knowledgeable trainers.

Once they are finished their training they are looking for jobs: and now they can find them quickly.

Agriculture employers can post jobs for free at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/GCED or, if they do not regularly use the internet, they can fax their postings to Green Certificate Program Coordinators. Job seekers can simply view the jobs available and contact employers directly. The Directory also offers job seekers the option of posting a profiles of their own, giving employers seamless access to information about a worker's skills or preferred work schedule.

If you would like to learn more or know someone who is looking for work, call 780.427.4183 or visit www.agriculture.alberta.ca/gced today.

Where Do the Graduates Go?

Nicole Hornett

Although Raelene Mercer, Green Certificate Program Coordinator, is based in Edmonton, she keeps in touch with people involved in production agriculture and supporting agri-businesses. Among the people she encounters are Green Certificate Program graduates. “I am surprised at how many rural Albertans went through the program. They all speak very highly of the people and quality of the experience,” she says.

Many of these program graduates say that they initially signed up for the program because they thought it would be an easy way to obtain 16 high school credits. Once students progress in the program they not only gain competence in the required skills, but they start to become aware of the complexity and interrelatedness of all farming activities.

Raelene is quick to point out that, besides gaining experience and displaying personal growth, all program graduates have officially given themselves a leg-up when it comes to seeking employment. “When an employer sees Green Certificate on a resumé, they can be assured of two factors: it is a reliable industry standard and the applicant has broadened his or her understanding of what is required to get the job done safely and efficiently.”

Graduates of the program take many routes. Raelene says, “They are often running farm operations today, working within ag-businesses or exploring post-secondary options. They appreciate the value of their training and don’t tend to brush it under the rug.”

Exploring, beginning or building a career in agriculture could be as straightforward as enrolling in the Green Certificate Program. Visit the [program website](#) for more information.



She Came Home to Agriculture

Nicole Hornett

If you ask Jodi Drozda how she came to work for Alberta Agriculture and Food, chances are she'll credit the Green Certificate Program. Like many high school students, she enrolled in the program because her parents had a cow-calf operation. "It was an opportunity to achieve formal recognition of my skills that would be transferable in the agriculture industry," says Jodi.

After completing a degree from the University of Alberta, she started looking for a job that would allow her to serve the public, "I took a Bachelor of Arts degree because it is a good foundation for government or non-profit type work. My first job after graduation was working with towns and counties in rural Alberta," she says.

Reflecting on her Green Certificate experience, she feels the adaptability and communication skills she developed while completing the program helped her significantly though university and into the work force. "I was a little shy in high school and the program gave me a safe environment to practice my skills," says Jodi.

In her current role, as a project coordinator, she credits the program for helping her acquire management and problem solving skills. "A lot of the indirect skills I learned with the Green Certificate are important to doing my job effectively every day," she says.

"I wouldn't have got this job opportunity with Alberta Agriculture and Food if I hadn't taken the Green Certificate Program. In a way, I feel like I have gone full circle. I saw what was out there and then came back to my roots – agriculture!" says Jodi.

To view the training opportunities with the Green Certificate Program, visit the program's webpage at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/greencertificate.

Rural Matters! Finding Rural Canada's Voice

“Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities” is an upcoming national symposium that seeks to empower and inform by providing a unique forum for rural stakeholders. Delegates from communities, government, academia, aboriginal and youth organizations will come together to share the good work already being done, talk about what there is yet to do, explore common ground and find a common voice on what matters most to rural Canada. The symposium will be a combination of thought-provoking speakers, education sessions, and active roundtable discussions focused on economic governance, infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

“Rural Matters!” is hosted by the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) at the Shaw Conference Center in Edmonton from July 5 to 8, 2008. “Rural Matters!” will attract an estimated 1,250 attendees from across Canada. More information on the symposium components, how to register and the event program can be found on the website at www.ruralmatters.ca or by calling the Rural Matters! Planning Team at 780.955.4078.

The definition of “rural” can be quite complicated, and it seems that there are many ways to define it. For some “rural” is still viewed as the hinterland, the wide open spaces where population is low and raw resources abound. For others, “rural” means communities large and small outside of our major cities and even extends to our country’s rapidly growing suburban areas.

Estimates on Canada’s current rural population range from 22 to 38 percent, depending on which definition of “rural” you are using. If you take the population quotient out of the definition, “rural” can be defined as the 99.8% of Canada’s 10 million square kilometers of land mass that is outside a metropolitan or city area.

However you define it, most would agree that “rural” is a key part of the Canadian tapestry, a cornerstone of Canada’s heritage, a place where common sense values and solid work ethics characterize the people, and the resource lifeblood of what is an increasingly urbanized country. While “rural” can mean different things to different

people, it remains a vibrant and diverse way of life for many, a significant driver of the national economy, and an environment to be preserved and valued. Like its urban counterpart, rural Canada is also a place that must find its position and worth in the emerging global context.

In modern times, we are all too familiar with adversarial terms like “urban-rural divide”, “rural vs. urban” and “rural decline vs. urban growth”. Underlying these terms and dialogues is the view that rural and urban interests are in opposition and that increases in urban population and profile are harmful to rural interests, populations, and way of life. With an increase in public policy focus on the on-going population shift to urban Canada and the well-articulated infrastructure and social needs of our nation’s cities, many fear the rural message has been lost or simply forgotten.

With marked trends towards urbanization and an enhanced focus on urban development pressures across Canada, it is indeed time for rural, remote, northern and small urban communities to find their collective voice and champion their value and vitality in what is an increasingly urbanized world. It is time for rural Canadians to stand alongside their urban counterparts to empower citizens and inform governments about its unique needs and priorities. Perhaps it is also time to stop looking at the issue of rural sustainability as a “rural vs. urban” problem, and to explore the ways in which rural and urban are intrinsically intertwined and how development and public policy decisions can best move forward to sustain both rural and urban communities in a mutually beneficial way.

In recent years, urban Canada has found its collective voice. Newspapers, television and government policy debates are consumed with the “urban infrastructure deficit”, “our crumbling cities” and “the fiscal imbalance faced by our large cities”. The primary challenge for rural stakeholders is not to drown out the voice of its urban neighbours, but to find a cohesive voice of its own. Rural stakeholders need to find a voice that speaks for the core values, understandings and needs of rural Canada and can articulate those values to its urban neighbours, private sector partners and public policy makers. In taking up this challenge, rural Canada needs to find common ground, set public

policy priorities that best serve its sustainable future, and, in so doing, gain a better understanding of the factors that shape rural-urban interdependencies and the need for a mutually sustainable future.

The challenge of finding a common and cohesive rural voice that speaks for all rural, remote, northern and small urban Canadians is a daunting one. It is also a challenge that has already been undertaken by many organizations, government entities and rural stakeholder groups that have been hard at work examining rural issues, forming rural policy statements and articulating rural priorities and needs on behalf of their particular demographic.

Provincial municipal associations develop policy and advocate on behalf of their communities through their annual conventions and resolutions sessions. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) works diligently to consolidate the municipal message in Canada before the federal government and has a specific focus on rural issues through its Rural and Northern Forum.

Producer and commodity groups representing are in a constant process of examining rural issues and advocating on behalf of rural industry, the environment and other interests.

Academic institutions and policy think tanks play a pivotal role in examining the shifting trends and needs associated with rural vitality and sustainability. Organizations like the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF), the Rural Development Institute in Manitoba, and the Harris Centre at Memorial University are just a few of the academic organizations that actively seek to move theory and academic thought into practice.

Governments themselves are also actively developing rural policy and seeking to address rural needs through provincial rural development strategies and federal policy focus.

Yet with all of this good and diligent work, a loud, cohesive rural voice has not emerged in Canada to the same extent as an urban one has. There is more work to do in finding common ground and articulating a national rural vision.