



NEWS AND VIEWS

SEPTEMBER, 2009

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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: Lac La Biche District Natural Gas Co-op



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The Lac La Biche Natural Gas Co-op was formed in the early 1970s to deliver natural gas and provide member services associated with natural gas to rural residents in the County of Lac La Biche. Currently the Co-op has 1,625 members and continues to grow in

membership due to the expansion of rural sub-divisions and country residential acreages. Recently the Co-op has expanded services and business to purchase equipment to construct new services and provide custom work to other local individuals and businesses. The Co-op shares equipment and trades labor with another member owned utility, North Parkland Power REA. The Co-op is a member of the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops, a provincial organization that represents Gas Co-ops, Native Systems and Municipal system. The Co-op is governed by seven elected individuals living within the franchise area of the Co-op. The Co-op is part owner of Gas Alberta Inc., the privately owned company that supplies natural gas to the Natural Gas Co-ops in Alberta.

The Lac La Biche Natural Gas Co-op has a mandate to deliver and supply natural gas to members in the co-op franchise area at a break even basis. The co-op is responsible for safe and efficient operation of the natural gas system. Where possible the Co-op also has a mandate to work and use the services of other member owed co-ops.

Career Focus Internship Program

Alberta Community and Co-operative Association are pleased to announce that the Career Focus Internship Program will continue!

We are once again looking for host organization and interns. If you are interested, please contact Dianne at 780-963-3766 for more information.

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2009 Rise and Shine Event: Alternative Energy and Co-ops

Please keep an eye on the website for further information or contact Richard Stringham:
Phone: 780-669-9720
e-mail: coopdev@acca.coop

You must register by October 13.

To register:
Contact Liane at ACCA
Phone: 780-963-3766
email: lcourchesne@acca.coop

Full brochure with registration form may be downloaded from [the ACCA website](#).

Mark Thursday, October 15, 2009 in Calgary for this year's ACCA Rise and Shine forum.

Renewable energy sources are gaining interest in the public eye with several such initiatives already underway in Alberta as well as other parts of the globe. Often, these initiatives generate energy at a local or regional level. Co-operatives have long been an effective form of community-owned enterprise, as the principles of co-operatives are applied in new ways to the community's ever changing needs.

Join us as we learn about and explore local ownership of alternative energy in this province. What are the opportunities and challenges for local ownership? What needs to happen to encourage more locally-owned, alternative energy initiatives, particularly co-operatives? What role can the established co-operatives play in this development?

Speakers include **Steve Rison**, Chair, Peace Energy Cooperative; **Dr. Noel Keough**, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, and **Jim Jones**, Senior Development Officer, Bio-Industrial Development, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

This year's event will also feature an Alternative Energy Marketplace. Groups with alternative energy initiatives are invited to have a display and to make a brief presentation to make their initiative known to the audience.

Register now! [Download a copy of the brochure with registration form](#).

Upcoming ACCA Workshops

The new ACCA Workshop brochure is [now available for download](#) from the website. This year there are five workshops available to attend.

- Co-operative Basics
- Financial Analysis and Planning for Non-Financial Managers
- Financial Analysis and Planning for Non-Financial Managers – Advanced
- Parliamentary Procedures
- 2009 Agriculture Update for Professionals

50th Anniversary of ACCA Co-operative Youth Program

ACCA (formally REDA – Rural Education and Development Association) is proud to announce that the ACCA Co-operative Youth Program is celebrating its 50th anniversary!

To celebrate this momentous occasion we will be hosting a special 50th Anniversary Family Weekend from November 6 to 8, 2009 at the Goldeye Centre, located near Nordegg, Alberta. We invite past participants, volunteer staff, sponsors, individuals and families to join us. There will also be an opportunity to support the future endeavors of the ACCA Co-operative Youth Program through a silent and/or live auction.

Planning is underway with activities such as a site tour, sleigh rides, family games and a gala evening. Please note that there is no registration cost to attend the celebration; however there is a cost for meals and accommodations at the Goldeye Centre (877-721-2102).

If you are interested in more information or to donate an item to the auction, please email acca@acca.coop. If you know of anyone who has attended or sponsored the program, please let them know about this celebration.

You can [download the registration](#) form here.

Executive Assistant Wanted

Application deadline is September 15, 2009 Full job description can be found [on the ACCA website](#) or at www.albertagsocieties.ca Please forward resumés to aaas@gov.ab.ca or by fax to 780-422-7755

The Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies is seeking an individual who can effectively communicate and work with volunteers and business people. This highly motivated individual will require strong organizational skills as well as strong computer skills including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, and Microsoft Excel. Experience with an accounting software program is required with a preference given to experience with Simply Accounting. This full-time position is located in Edmonton, Alberta.



CDI Receives Excellent Response To First ICP Deadline

The [Co-operative Development Initiative](#) (CDI) has received 193 applications for project funding in its first call for submissions under CDI's Innovative Co-operative Projects component.

The deadline for submissions for the first round of funding was July 31. “We are extremely pleased with the response,” said CDI Program Manager Stéphane Audet. “The proposals come from all parts of the co-op sector, from all regions of the country and from both official language groups.”

Mr. Audet said applicants will be notified in October as to whether their funding proposals were successful. The second call for submissions – for projects starting on April 1, 2010 – will be launched this fall with a deadline of November 30.

Meanwhile, CDI has completed the hiring of its staff team. In addition to Mr. Audet, the CDI team consists of Co-op Development Officers Mark Goldblatt (formerly Co-op Development Manager for the Canadian Co-operative Association), Stéphanie Guico, Andréa Renaud and Marshall Gallardo (formerly a project officer with the previous Ag-CDI program) as well as Administrative Assistant Esther Ouellet. CDI is jointly administered by CCA and the [Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité](#) (CCCM) with funding from the federal government.

CCA Pre-Budget Brief Calls for Co-op Investment Strategy

The [Canadian Co-operative Association](#) (CCA) is calling on the federal government to create a Co-operative Investment Strategy to ensure the financing and capitalization of new and emerging co-operatives.

[CCA's submission](#) to the Standing Committee on Finance urges the government to develop a strategy which includes both a Co-op Investment Plan (CIP) and a Co-operative Development Fund (CDF).

The CIP, which already exists in Quebec, would allow members and employees of agricultural and worker co-ops to receive tax credits for investing in their own co-operatives. The CDF would be a self-sustaining repayable loan fund, similar to the Arctic Co-operative Development Fund, which co-ops across Canada could access for start-ups and major projects. The Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité (CCCM) is also calling for a CIP and a CDF in its pre-budget submission

In addition to the Co-operative Investment Strategy, CCA's brief calls upon the government to expand the federal Community Adjustment Fund (CAF) and develop a dedicated component which promotes the use of co-operatives and social enterprises. The CAF is a federal program aimed at creating new jobs at the community level.

Finally, CCA urges the government to increase its spending for international development assistance and promote a greater role for civil society – including co-operatives – in the delivery of assistance.

Credit Unions Tops in Customer Service

For the fifth year in a row, an independent survey of thousands of Canadians has shown that credit unions rank first in overall quality of customer service among all financial institutions.

Global market research firm Synovate announced its [2009 Best Banking Awards](#), which are derived from its Customer Service Index. It found credit unions ranked ahead of banks and other financial institutions in overall customer service excellence, “values my business” and branch service excellence. Credit unions also tied for first in financial planning and advice, “recommend to friends and family” and telephone banking excellence.

“We are pleased to see that Canadians continue to rate their experience at credit unions very highly,” said David Phillips, CEO of [Credit Union Central of Canada](#).

The Synovate Customer Service Index survey had nearly 39,000 responses among a regionally and demographically representative sample of Canadians. The survey has been conducted annually since 1987.

Pollock's Hardware Celebrates Successful First Year as Co-op

A historic Winnipeg hardware store that became a co-operative after its owners retired and closed the business has reported record sales during its first year as a co-op. [Pollock's Hardware](#), located in the city's North End, was established as a private business in 1922. It closed down after 85 years in operation when no new owner could be found.

In June 2008, Pollock's was reborn as a co-op organized by local residents. According to local activist and co-op member Tom Simms, who wrote an [article](#) about Pollock's in the Winnipeg Free Press, first-year sales were 22 per cent above projections and member equity investments were 38 per cent above the established business plan target. The co-op now has 1,250 members.

"Members of our North End neighbourhood took a huge risk last year when we made the decision as a community to save our local hardware store," he wrote in his article. "We can all take pride in the way we were able to apply our community and co-operative values to re-open the doors of Pollock's Hardware."

First Global Women's Leadership Forum Held at WOCCU Conference

Women leaders and members of credit unions around the globe want to be heard. This was among the messages brought forward to the [World Credit Union Conference in Barcelona](#) in July by a forum of credit union women from 17 countries who met to discuss the challenges they face in leadership positions, and strategic issues such as growing market share and facilitating greater access to credit unions worldwide.

"It was a privilege to work with such a wide variety of amazing and talented women from so many countries," says forum organizer Heather McLachlin, Vice President, Business Development & Partnerships at [The CUMIS Group Ltd.](#) in Burlington, ON.

Ms. McLachlin is also chair of the [Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada's Be the Change Campaign](#) which funded the participation of eight women to attend the forum. Close to \$100,000 has been raised in donations and pledges to date.

Information Needed on Co-Ops Involving Immigrants

The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) is encouraging co-operators to participate in a survey that could generate more resources for co-operatives focused on the needs of immigrants and refugees.

The Canadian CED Network obtained funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada for a two-year project called Immigrant Settlement and Integration through Social Enterprise (ISISE). The project's steering committee includes Lynne Markell, Government Affairs and Public Policy advisor for CCA.

The project's first step is to survey immigrant co-operatives and social enterprises and the organizations that support immigrant social enterprise development. The project has \$120,000 in funding to help immigrant social enterprises undertake business planning and development work. The call for proposals will occur this fall and the money must be spent by the end of this fiscal year.

The survey, together with more information on the project, can be found at www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/?q=en/node/5847. To complete the survey by phone, contact Nicole Rosenow-Redhead, ISISE Project Researcher 1-877-202-2268, ext.104 or nrosenow@ccednet-rcdec.ca.

Co-operatives Europe Launches Climate Change Campaign

[Co-operatives Europe](#), the European region of the [International Co-operative Alliance](#), has appealed to co-operators worldwide to support its campaign to address the threat of climate change.

ACT! - Addressing the Climate Threat, launched the campaign at its General Assembly in June. ACT! is encouraging all co-operatives to significantly reduce their carbon emissions, to inform and motivate their workers and members to reduce their own carbon emissions, and to lobby to persuade politicians to address the climate threat.

A website and petition are currently being developed; the petition will resemble and contribute to the United Nations campaign on climate change. The campaign is also part of the buildup to the [UN Climate Conference](#) scheduled for Copenhagen in December.

Co-ops Resilient In Economic Crisis: ILO Report

A new International Labour Organization (ILO) report provides compelling evidence that co-ops are more resilient than other business models in times of economic crisis.

Resilience of the Co-operative Business Model in Times of Crisis was authored by Lou Hammond Ketilson, Director of the [Centre for the Study of Co-operatives](#) at the University of Saskatchewan and Johnston Birchall, Professor of Social Policy at Sterling University in Scotland.

The report uses historical and current evidence from around the world to explain the sustainability of co-operatives and why this form of enterprise can withstand crisis. It also makes recommendations for ways in which the ILO can strengthen its efforts to promote co-operatives.

The report is available on the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) website at www.ica.coop/activities/un/2009-coop-resilience.pdf

National Associations Push for International Year of Co-Operatives

Canada's two national co-op associations are calling on the federal government to support a United Nations resolution to proclaim an International Year of Co-operatives, probably in 2011 or 2012.

In a letter to the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), the [Canadian Co-operative Association](#) (CCA) and the [Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité](#) (CCCM) asked that Canada support the initiative when it goes before the UN General Assembly this fall. In addition to his other portfolios, Mr. Blackburn is the minister responsible for the federal Co-operatives Secretariat.

The idea for an International Year of Co-operatives was put forth by the government of Mongolia in 2007. In December of that year, the UN adopted a motion asking the UN Secretary General to assess the feasibility and interest for such a year; his report is expected to go before the General Assembly in the fall.

The national associations are urging that all co-operators let the government know how important it is for Canada to support the UN resolution. [Click here](#) to read CCA and CCCM's joint letter.

Co-op Supports New Organic Food Standards

Two major developments in the Canadian organic food sector will benefit consumers and producers while contributing long-term to an even healthier organic marketplace.

[Organic Meadow Co-operative Inc.](#), Canada's first organic dairy company and one of the country's leading organic brands, strongly endorsed the new [Canadian Organic Product Regulations](#) as well as a new US-Canada agreement allowing certified organic foods to be sold in both countries.

The new Canadian law, 20 years in the making, enshrines in regulation the principles of the organic movement, including care for the soil, production of crops using natural methods, composting, crop rotation, grazing for cattle and other farm animals, natural health-care methods and a comprehensive list of other required practices.

"It will now be absolutely clear what consumers are purchasing when they buy certified organic dairy products or any organic foods," said Steve Cavell, CEO of Organic Meadow.

The revised Canadian standards came into force at the end of June.

Ontario Grocers Go Independent, Form Co-op

Five owners of Sobeys grocery store franchises in southwestern Ontario have broken away from Sobeys and formed a co-op because of policies that prevented them from buying local products.

The [Independent Hometown Grocers Co-op](#) was created after the franchise owners, who operated a total of nine Sobeys stores, decided to go independent in an effort to sell local food. Sobeys' policies had required the stores to source only federally-inspected meat, which came primarily from Alberta and the US.

"We feel that local food, local presence is huge in our market and we wanted to take advantage of that," said Dale Kropf, owner of five of the stores.

The stores have retained their wholesale relationship with Sobeys for such items as dog food, spices and breakfast cereals, but are now selling provincially-inspected meat supplied by area farmers.

UK Co-op Helps Alberta First Nation Fight Oil Sands Development

Britain's [The Co-operative Group](#), the world's largest consumer co-op, is joining a First Nations community in Alberta in its fight to stop the expansion of oil sands development in that province.

The Beaver Lake Cree First Nation in Lac La Biche, Alberta filed a lawsuit in May 2008 contesting proposed oil sands developments in areas they say their ancestors used for hunting, trapping and fishing. In July, The Co-operative Group donated \$100,000 to support the lawsuit, on top of a \$90,000 donation it made last March.

Colin Baines, ethics advisor for The Co-operative Group, said the oil sands have become a target because co-op members are concerned about the environmental impact of development there.

Canadian Charities to Benefit from the Co-operators' Directed Donation Program

More than 90 charitable organizations across Canada will benefit from a total of \$237,000 as part of this year's Direct Donations program at [The Co-operators](#). Through the program, staff members, directors and delegates choose charitable causes to support with corporate funds.

Each staff member had an opportunity to direct \$75 of corporate money toward the organization of their choice from among a list of organizations suggested by employee. In all, 2,961 staff – 82 per cent of all Co-operators employees – directed donations of \$222,075 to charitable organizations, while board members and delegates donated a further \$15,375.

The five largest staff-directed donations went to the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children, the Regina and Guelph branches of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation and Sofia House, a Women's and Children's Shelter in Regina. The funding was provided from The Co-operators Foundation, through which the organization supports social economy enterprises and other worthy causes in Canada.

Visit the Canadian Co-operative Hall of Fame

The Canadian Co-operative Hall of Fame is now a (virtual) reality.

Learn about the achievements of outstanding Canadian co-operators past and present at www.coopscanada.coop/public_html/hof/.

The Hall of Fame, which was launched by the Canadian Co-operative Association at its 100th anniversary National Congress in June, includes 14 pioneers of the Canadian co-op movement as well as winners of the Canadian Co-operative Achievement Award and the Global Co-operator Award.

Copies of “A Century Of Co-operation” Still Available

If you haven't yet purchased your copy of A Century of Co-operation, you're not too late. Copies of the book, which was launched at the [Canadian Co-operative Association's \(CCA\) National Congress](#) in June, are still available for individual and bulk orders.

Written by historian [Ian MacPherson](#), Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria, the 234-page book provides a lively look at the events, people and places that made Canada's co-operative sector what it is today. Woven throughout the text are dozens of rarely-seen historical photos, beautifully presented in a large-format trade paperback edition.

The cost of an individual copy is \$50 plus GST and shipping and handling, but bulk discounts are available for ordering more than 10 copies. It's not too early to start thinking of the perfect Christmas present for your favourite co-operator.

The book can be ordered from CCA's website, where you can also [read the first chapter](#). [Click here](#) to download an order form.

CASC Conference Papers Now Online

Papers presented at this year's Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation (CASC) conference, which took place in Ottawa in May, are now available online.

Go to www.coopresearch.coop/2009/06/24/conference-papers-available/ to download papers on a variety of topics. And if you were a CASC conference presenter who has not yet submitted your paper or presentation, you can do so by emailing casc_vp@coopresearch.coop.

Thriving in Uncertain Times: 12th Annual Farmer Co-operatives Conference

November 9-10, 2009 in St. Paul, Minnesota

From their website....

How can agricultural co-operatives navigate today's economic uncertainties without losing sight of tomorrow's opportunities? The 12th Annual Farmer Cooperatives Conference will explore issues and strategies such as:

Risk and uncertainty

Volatility characterizes every aspect of agribusiness, from input costs to market demand. Learn how flexible strategies for planning and risk management can buffer the uncertainty of changing business conditions.

Changing market demand

Consumer preferences are changing, and the economic downturn is affecting household decisions. Understanding shifts in consumer demand can lead to an effective marketplace response.

Energy

Climate-change legislation may affect agricultural practices and priorities. Understanding possible changes in energy policy can create cooperative opportunity

Capitalization challenges

Hear how innovative equity and financial management programs might capitalize new venture opportunities.

More information is available at: <http://www.uwcc.wisc.edu/farmercoops09/>



Missed the July Innovative Co-operative Project Application Deadline?

If you learned too late about the July 31st application deadline for the Innovative Co-operative Project (ICP) funding, another opportunity lies just around the corner. The next deadline for ICP funding is November 30, 2009. Successful applicants will receive funding for the new project year (beginning April 2010).

The program will provide grants of \$5,000 to \$75,000 per project per year. Multi-year projects with a maximum duration of four years are also eligible, as long as the project will end before the program expires on March 31, 2013. The Innovative Co-operative Projects component of CDI is particularly interested in projects in the following sectors:

- Agriculture, including farmer-driven projects for value-added agriculture and biofuels;
- Rural/northern community development;
- Innovative goods and services, including innovative uses of technology
- Capacity building and sustainability

Application forms are not yet available, as the form used for the last round of applications will likely be modified based upon the experience of the first round of applications. However, interested groups can view the previous application form and guidelines at: <http://www.coopscanada.coop/en/coopdev/CDI/Innovative-Co-operative-Projects>

Ten applications were submitted from Albertans in this last round and are in the evaluation process. Final decisions will be made in October.

