



ALBERTA COMMUNITY AND CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION  
201, 4405 – 50 Street, Stony Plain, Alberta, T7Z 1L5

**INFORMATION**  
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## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

### **Co-operatives ready to address healthcare, seniors housing, and municipal services in response to provincial budget**

*(October 25, 2019 – Stony Plain)* After release of the new budget, the Alberta Community and Cooperatives Association (ACCA) stands ready to work with the Alberta Government to find innovative solutions to deal with budget constraints, particularly in healthcare, seniors housing and municipal services.

“Tough times require tough actions,” said Randy Taylor, ACCA board chair. “The economic difficulties faced by many Albertans require all of us to tighten our purse strings, personally and as a government. Through challenges come opportunities, and co-operatives have grown and innovated through tough times and we are prepared to do so again.”

As Alberta’s population ages, co-operatives can provide responsive, cost-effective and quality services to seniors in both health care and housing and ACCA sees an opportunity to utilize the co-operative model within Alberta Health’s Clinical Alternative Relationship Plans (ARP).

“We know there is a lot of concern around private health care systems, which is why the co-operative model makes so much sense,” said Paul Cabaj, Interim Executive Director. “Unlike private health care systems, co-operative health services are owned and managed by their patients on a non-profit basis and have proven they can work fully within the *Canada Health Act*. There are already over 500 health and social service co-operatives in Canada and they are proving to be a successful model that we can use right here in Alberta by exploring the opportunities through ARP.”

Housing for seniors is another key issue, and co-operatives provide opportunities to address these issues through seniors housing co-operatives and home care services that allow seniors to age in place.

“We have seen how senior housing and home care co-operatives can provide accessible quality services for low and middle income seniors,” says Ayanna Innis, Executive Director of the Northern Alberta Housing Co-operative Association. “Co-operatives can be tied to a wide range of home care services that allow seniors to stay in their homes longer. This not only reduces the need for seniors’ facilities, but also reduces the overall public health care costs.”



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As co-operatives are community-based organizations, ACCA sees them as a natural partner for municipalities as well.

“A growing number of municipalities in other jurisdictions are already partnering with non-profits, the private sector, and co-operative businesses to fill gaps in services, including group purchasing to reduce transit costs, local energy generation, childcare services, and affordable housing, particularly for seniors.” said Cabaj. “The co-operative model is a powerful tool for municipal collaboration that can operate independently from provincial and federal regulations and funding and can help build the sustainability and resiliency of Alberta communities.”

“Co-operative businesses are woven into the fabric of Alberta’s economy and society,” said Taylor. “ACCA is ready to work with the provincial and municipal governments to explore the potential of utilizing the co-operative model to resolve social, economic, and healthcare issues in support of our collective vision of building better and stronger Alberta communities.”

- 30 -

**About the ACCA:** The Alberta Community and Co-operative Association (ACCA) is a leading provincial co-operative trade association. A not-for-profit organization, ACCA was incorporated as a co-operative in 2005 after merging with the Rural Education Development Association (REDA). Since 2005, ACCA has been consulted on opportunities leading to collaborative social and economic development in Alberta communities and has helped strengthen and diversify existing co-operative enterprises. ACCA is one of the largest provincial associations in Canada and has delivered innovative programs such as Unleashing Local Capital, lobbied the government for co-op friendly policies, and has run the largest co-operative youth leadership program in Canada for over 60 years.

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## BACKGROUND

### Co-operatives ready to address healthcare, seniors housing, and municipal services in response to provincial budget

**Health Services:** With an aging population and ever evolving and costly new technologies, demands on the public purse for health services will only grow. Left on its current trajectory of escalating costs, health care spending would consume the entirety of government revenues. The accelerating costs of health care is a challenge for governments across the world. It is no accident that health care is now one of the fastest areas of growth in the co-operative movement.

Co-operative health services, owned and managed by their patients on a non-profit basis, have proven that they can work fully within the *Canada Health Act*. They have proven to be effective in providing services to underserved communities and populations. Co-operatives are particularly adept at building health care teams that allow nurse practitioners, pharmacists and other health practitioners to work to their full scope of practice. Many employ doctors on a salaried as opposed to fee for service basis, controlling costs while improving personalized care.

In Quebec, the home care services are now dominated by multi-stakeholder home care co-operatives that provide clients and better working conditions for staff. Outside of Quebec, Canadian co-operatives provide outpatient care directly or indirectly through community health clinics, ambulance services and home care. Health and senior care co-operatives offer quality solutions that are often more personalized and transparent than what is found in the public system or among private providers.

#### Select examples of Health and Senior Care Cooperatives

*Saskatoon Community Clinic (Saskatchewan)* [saskatooncommunityclinic.ca](http://saskatooncommunityclinic.ca)

The Saskatoon Community Clinic is a provider of primary health care services. The ultimate goal is to build a healthy population by providing support focused on healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, patient education, diagnosis and treatment. Although owned and operated by its members, its services are open to all.

*The Medical Clinic Les Grès* [www.cliniquemedicalelesgres.ca](http://www.cliniquemedicalelesgres.ca) Saint-Étienne-des-Grès were the first health services cooperative in Quebec to open in 1995. Currently, 12 doctors and a team of nurse clinicians, a specialized nurse, a social worker and a physiotherapist people, and many surrounding communities. The clinic also houses a pharmacy, a dentist, an optometrist, psychologists and a physiotherapist.

*Community First Health Co-op (British Columbia)* [healthco-op.ca](http://healthco-op.ca) Founded in 2003 in response to the loss of services at the local level, Community First Health Co-op (CFHC) is a cooperative of consumers and care providers to improve the health and well-being of communities, families and individuals by providing health care and dental care in the Nelson area.



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*The EESAD Cooperation Network* (Entreprise d'économie sociale en aide à domicile) [aidechezsoi.com](http://aidechezsoi.com) is present in the seventeen administrative regions of the province. Via its network of co-operative and non-profit home care organizations, they provide more than seven million hours of service to 100,000 people, including nearly one million hours of business support services. EESAD employs more than 9,400 people, including 8,700 home service providers with the necessary skills and expertise, to provide quality home support and services to citizens in need.

*Canadian Federation of Health Co-operatives* (British Columbia) [healthcoopscanada.coop](http://healthcoopscanada.coop)  
The Canadian Federation of Health Cooperatives brings together co-operatives across Canada that focus on wellness, social services and health. Offering networking and training opportunities on specialized and larger topics, this national federation shares the work of its member cooperatives and represents the entire sector.

**Municipal services and infrastructure:** The co-operative model is a powerful tool for municipal collaboration that is independent of provincial and federal regulations and funding. A growing number of municipalities have already formed partnerships with non-profits, the private sector and co-operative businesses to fill gaps in services ranging from co-operative purchasing agreements to reduce costs to transit, local energy generation, childcare, and affordable housing.

Many municipal leaders in Alberta are already active in supporting Development Opportunity co-operatives, which are local investment vehicles that enable Albertans to invest in key economic infrastructure, local businesses and services.

One example is the Sangudo Opportunity Development Co-op, located in the Hamlet of Sangudo, northwest of Edmonton. The first of its kind in Alberta, community members invested in a co-operative to enhance the community's social and economic well-being by supporting the development of new and existing businesses. Local Investing YYC is playing a similar role in an urban environment investing in Calgary based businesses.

Battle River Railway NGO Inc. is a new generation cooperative owned by municipalities and farmers. It is one of the best-run short line railways in Canada that connects with the CN rail line for movement of goods such as grain and provides tourism opportunities through the passenger car excursion service.