



Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation Newsletter

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Register for the 2010 CWCF Annual Conference



The 2010 CWCF Conference and AGM titled "Worker Co-operatives and Sustainable Development" will be held in Vancouver from October 28-30, 2010, together with a CoopZone Developers' Forum. One of two keynote speakers is Peter Robinson, CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation and former CEO of Mountain Equipment Co-op; a second keynote will be by VanCity.

There will be a bicycle tour to co-operatives in Vancouver in addition to a panel exploring how we can promote the worker co-operative model as a way to help build the green and sustainable economy. The Conference takes place at the YWCA Hotel. We encourage you to register soon; the early-bird registration discount ends on Sept. 16th. To view the Conference agenda and to register visit: www.canadianworker.coop/news/worker-co-op-news/2010-cwcf-conference-and-agm-agenda-and-registration.

CWCF Member Benefits Plan Now Available



the co-operators
A Better Place For You™

CWCF is pleased to announce a new health and medical benefits plan for members. Coverage is available for individuals and groups. Coverage includes hospital bills, prescription drugs, dental care, vision care, chiropractic, massage, naturopath, accident insurance, disability insurance, life insurance, international medical consultation service and travel insurance. CWCF has partnered with CBA, with The Co-operators as the preferred supplier, to offer this program. Please note that the benefit rates are set on an individual and co-op by co-op basis. For more information call 1-800-463-2555 or email memberservices@corpben.com.

Association of Cooperatives - The Big Cheese

- US Worker Cooperative Film Festival August 5th
- 2010 US Federation of Worker Cooperatives Conference Blog Posts

The Worker Co-op Sector in Canada: Success Factors, and Planning for Growth



The results of the CWCF survey indicated that a large majority of founding members in successful worker co-operatives did not have business experience. Overriding this was the willingness of members to work together and to continuously learn on the job in a working environment that allows them to express their values and social concerns. Through this, successful worker co-operatives are able to carve a niche in their business sector by providing high quality goods and services.

By better understanding the success factors for individual worker co-operatives, the goal of CWCF is to pave the way for more growth and more success for worker co-operatives across Canada. To read the entire paper please visit: www.canadianworker.coop/resources/documents/worker-co-op-sector-canada-success-factors-and-planning-growth.

The Worker Co-operative Movements in Italy, Mondragon and France: Context, Success Factors and Lessons



These 3 countries or regions have the largest and most dynamic worker co-op movements in the world. There are many common elements contributing to the success of the worker co-op movement in all 3 places. These were: (1) sufficient capital accessible to worker co-ops; (2) technical assistance provided to worker co-ops in the start-up phase; (3) a mandatory indivisible reserve; (4) significant federation and consortia structures which support, guide, direct, and help educate the worker co-operatives; (5) industry clusters; (6) a strong sense of solidarity and inter-co-operation;

and (7) scale: to enable the worker co-op movements to be taken seriously by governments, the broader co-operative sector, etc. To read the entire paper please visit:

www.canadianworker.coop/resources/documents/worker-co-operative-movements-italy-mondragon-and-france-context-success-factors.

Experience the Co-operative Difference Video Contest - Win Prizes



In keeping with this year's Co-op Week theme, Experience the Co-operative Difference, the Canadian Co-operative Association, CCA, is giving you the opportunity to tell the world - in video (in 90 seconds or less) -- what the co-operative difference means to you. Enter the video contest and you can win a basket of co-op products valued at \$150. The top 3 videos and up to 7 "honourable mentions" will be featured on the CCA Cinema. All participants in the contest will receive an Experience the Co-operative Difference button, featuring the artwork of this year's Co-op Week posters. Winners will be announced during Co-op Week: October 17-23, 2010. For more

Information visit: <http://www.coopscanada.coop/videocontest>.

Results from Survey Measuring the Perceptions and Awareness of Co-ops



In preparation for the 2012 International Year of Co-operatives, some of the Canadian Co-operative Association-commissioned survey's findings include: 7 in 10 agree that co-ops keep money in the local economy, are an important part of their communities and create jobs that help support local communities; more than 2/3s of respondents agree that co-ops are a trusted place to do business and save members money; 2/3s agree that co-operatives provide quality

products and services; the same percentage of respondents agrees that co-ops offer good customer service and have a good reputation; one in five respondents consider themselves to be very familiar or somewhat familiar with co-ops. For more information visit:

http://www.coopscanada.coop/en/about_co-operative/Coop_survey.

Climate Smart - Helping Businesses Take Action on Climate Change



Climate Smart, an EcoTrust Canada social enterprise, grew out of the recognition that the engines of our local economies - small and medium-sized enterprises - have been largely overlooked in the development of policies and tools to address climate change.

The Climate Smart training program, over two and a half months, takes organizations through the process of creating a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and developing reduction strategies with a focus on cost benefits. VanCity and MEC are helping subsidize the registration fee for BC-based co-ops. To learn how your co-operative can reduce emissions and save money visit: www.climatesmartbusiness.com/home/climatesmart.

Jim Hightower Keynote Speech at 2010 United States Worker Co-operative Conference



August 7, 2010 (San Francisco) - Hightower is a cowboy-hat-wearing populist from Austin, Texas with folksy charm. He says that today's politics is not about left or right, but up and down. "They think they are the top dog and we are the fire hydrants." Hightower believes that "we have to restructure and democratize the economy so that the wrongdoers do not have the power to do wrong." He says, "The co-op movement might be small, but we speak to the needs of the majority of the people." To reach our

potential he says, "We need to connect the movement together. We need to be reaching out especially to communities of colour, the union movement, working class folks and the broader youth movement."

Tour of the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives - The Big Cheese



The Cheese Board was created in 1967 by two co-founders who had previously worked in Kibbutz's in Israel. By providing abundant choice of European style cheeses to Berkeley (over 300), the Cheese Board has become one of the most successful worker co-operatives in North America. From the beginning the Cheese Board paid everyone the same, no matter what worker's previous experience was or their seniority.

The philosophy of the co-founders was that everyone's time was worth the same. To this day the Cheese Board maintains this policy.

When the Cheese Board was created, the Berkeley area was home to many revolutionary thinkers. Many thought that there was a revolution happening. Part of the ideology was that business and money were evil. Many initiatives were created to buck the system. Since the Cheese Board charged for their items and paid their staff, some activists called them a 'bourgeois' co-op. When the revolution did not come, the Cheese Board was one of the few alternative initiatives that survived.

The Cheese Board has now spun off 4 other Arizmendi's with the help of its own development and support co-op. Arizmendi is the nickname given to the founder of the Mondragon worker co-operative in Spain that now employs over 100,000 workers. There are now 140 workers all together in the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives. They receive over double the average industry wages. The Cheese Board workers receive \$21 an hour plus patronage dividends, in addition to health care, dental and a retirement savings plan. They work hard because they are all worker owners.

One of the balancing acts of the Cheese Board is paying a fair wage to its workers, a fair price to its suppliers and fair prices to their customers.

In 1997 the Cheese Board expanded now has 4 other Arizmendi franchises and another one on its way this year. These are financed by each Arizmendi franchise putting away 4% of their sales into the development and support co-operative. The workers of each new store determine their own wages. They start between \$12 and \$15 an hour and work their way up as they become more profitable. Applicants for new stores go through a 3 hour orientation session to explain the risks and rewards of the worker co-operative model and to ensure they are a good fit. New employees pay a \$1,000 equity share to become a worker-member of Arizmendi (the Cheese Board's equity is \$5,000, since it has been around so long). The Cheese Board spin offs have decided to focus on pizza, bread and pastries, for they have found that cheese inventory is too expensive.

Each store runs on consensus. If a decision is time sensitive and consensus is not achieved there is a 75% majority vote. Workers have a once a month general meeting to make major decisions.

Though Arizmendi is not a utopia, it is a practical alternative business that provides decent wages and a democratic workplace to its workers.

United States Worker Cooperative Film Festival August 5th - Check These Out Online



"Toxic Soil....What?" - This film is about the Toxic Soil Busters, a youth worker co-operative from Worcester, Massachusetts. They remove lead paint from yards of low income people. They were the darlings of the United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives Conference. They received the Co-op of the Year Award. since 2005 and have cleaned 36 properties. To see the film visit:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_t4Lf88gD0. Other films found online:

"A New Beginning" - A heart warming film about a disabled worker co-op in the Philippines by the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada. Visit:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuLrFHc15D4&feature=player_embedded#!

- "Ram Wools Yarn Co-op" - This film by Chris McCarville is about a worker co-op conversion in Winnipeg. Visit:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TnaNdLYGuo

- "Grassroots Economy Festival" - As a response to expensive green festivals, this free festival in Oakland celebrated the bottom-up. Visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDrMkQFsQTO>

2010 US Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) Conference Blog Posts



The USFWC conference was recently held at the University of California, Berkeley from August 6 to 8, 2010. Over 270 people attended. The Bay Area is one of the worker co-operative hot spots in the United States. Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) had several people blogging during and after the conference. Some of the highlights were:

- Opening Day: The "surge" in the growth of cooperation.
- The Evergreen Co-op Model: Economic Development in Cleveland.
- The WAGES Model: Providing Hope and Jobs To Immigrants.
- Deeper Meanings of Cooperation: Self Responsibility and Self Help.

These blogs and others can be found at:

<http://www.geonewsletter.org/taxonomy/term/293>

CWCF

The Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation is a national, bilingual grassroots membership organization of and for worker cooperatives, related types of co-operatives (multi-stakeholder co-ops and worker-shareholder co-ops), and organizations that support the growth and development of worker cooperatives.

Please send any comments and suggestions:

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