



# Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation E-Newsletter

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[www.canadianworker.coop](http://www.canadianworker.coop)

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## CWCF News Briefs



The venue for the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation's AGM/ Conference has been moved to downtown Vancouver, October 28th - 30th. We are very excited to announce that our keynote speaker is now confirmed: Peter Robinson, CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation and former CEO of Mountain Equipment Co-op. The theme is Worker Co-operatives and Sustainable Development.

L'AGA et le Congrès de la Fédération canadienne des coopératives de travail se tiendront au centre-ville de Vancouver, du 28 au 30 octobre à l'Hôtel YWCA, un hôtel à service complet avec des salles de conférence. Plus de détails seront disponibles dans les prochaines semaines.

It is very fitting to hold this Conference in Vancouver, as mayor Gregor Robinson has announced that Vancouver will strive to be the "Greenest City on the Planet". The CoopZone Developers' Network will be hosting workshops in conjunction with the CWCF Conference. Incidentally, the new location will be the downtown YWCA Hotel, a full service hotel with conference facilities. The reason for the move is that Bowen Lodge by the Sea has been put up for sale. More details will be available in coming weeks.

Nous sommes très heureux d'annoncer que notre conférencier d'honneur sera M. Peter Robinson, chef de la direction de la Fondation David Suzuki et ancien PDG de Mountain Equipment Co-op. Le thème du Congrès 2010 est: Les Coopératives de travail et le développement durable. Il est tout à fait approprié de tenir ce Congrès à Vancouver, dans la mesure où le maire, Gregor Robinson, a annoncé que Vancouver a comme but de devenir «la ville la plus verte sur la Planète». Le Réseau des développeurs CoopZone offrira des ateliers en collaboration avec le Congrès de la FCCT.

CWCF has recently completed two research papers, each on success factors for growing the worker co-op movement. One focused on the movements in each of Italy, Spain (Mondragon) and France which have the largest and most dynamic worker co-op sectors in the world; the other on the movement here in Canada. We will be posting them on the CWCF web site within about 1 week. CWCF is grateful to the Social Economy Hub, whose funding supported this research.

La FCCT a récemment rédigé deux rapports de recherche, chacun sur les facteurs de succès pour le mouvement de la coopération du travail. Le

## Corporation Posts Profit, But At The Expense Of Jobs

premier porte sur les mouvements en Italie, en Espagne (Mondragon) et en France qui ont les secteurs des coopératives de travail les plus grands et les plus dynamiques dans le monde, et l'autre sur le mouvement ici au Canada. Nous allons les rendre disponibles sur le site web FCCT dans environ une semaine. La FCCT remercie le Centre canadien d'économie sociale, dont le financement a appuyé cette recherche.

In the lead-up to the UN's International Year of Co-operatives in 2012, CWCF is preparing to host a North America-wide Worker Co-op Conference in the fall of 2011, in Quebec City - bringing together worker co-operators from the US, Quebec, the rest of Canada and featuring speakers from these places, plus Europe and beyond. At the same time, there will be an international Forum on the potential of worker co-ops for succession planning and in other business conversion scenarios. Please watch this space for more details.

Dans le cadre des préparatifs de l'Année internationale des coopératives décrétée par les Nations unies en 2012, la FCCT se prépare à être l'hôte d'un Congrès des coopératives de travail de l'Amérique du Nord à l'automne de 2011, à Québec - regroupant les coopératives de travail des États-Unis, du Québec, du reste du Canada et des intervenants provenant de ces régions, ainsi que d'Europe et d'ailleurs dans la mesure où un Forum international sur la transmission d'entreprises à des coopératives se tiendra également à cette occasion. S'il vous plaît, regardez cet espace pour plus de détails dans les semaines à venir.

As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Comme toujours, n'hésitez pas à prendre contact avec nous.

Hazel Corcoran

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## CWCF Recipient of CCA Leadership in Governance Award



The Canadian Co-operative Association's Governance Award for small organizations went to the CWCF for its review and subsequent changes to its membership and governance systems and structures. The CCA panel also recognized CWCF's success in bridging the gap between anglophone and francophone members, and its ability to carry out its work with limited resources. The changes have resulted in a more diverse board, a more engaged membership and they have enabled two Quebec federations to join CWCF for the first time.

The CWCF's Peter Hough accepted the award from CCA Board member Mary Nirlungayuk at the recently held CCA Congress in Vancouver. Thank you to the CWCF Board and Staff for all their hard work and dedication and to the many CWCF members who participated in the governance review!

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## Nominate A Worker Co-op For Best Practices & Individual for Merit Award



SEED Winnipeg, 2008

The inaugural Worker Co-op 'Best Practices Award' will be given out at this year's 2010 CWCF Annual Conference in Vancouver (October 28-30). The Best Practices Award will enable sharing of innovative practices with other worker co-operatives in Canada to help strengthen the movement. It will also recognize worker co-operative excellence. There is a lot of great work being done, so let's celebrate it.

Best Practices can be in the areas of governance, marketing, quality assurance, cost control, the triple bottom line,

community impact, workplace atmosphere and more.

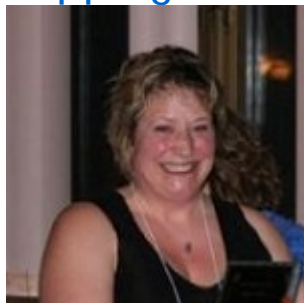
A second award, the Worker Co-op Merit Award, will also be presented. CWCF has changed its criteria so that only individuals can receive this award, to recognize outstanding contributions to the worker co-op movement. Generally the recipients chosen will be from the region in which the annual CWCF Conference is held (the BC region, this year).

The Merit Award winner and one member of the co-op from the winner of the Best Practices Award will have their registration and travel expenses covered to attend the CWCF Conference. The Best Practices Award winner will be asked to present their best practice at the CWCF Conference.

Nominate a worker co-operative for the Best Practices Award, or an individual for the Merit Award, and tell us why in less than 500 words by writing to David Wilson at [david@canadianworker.coop](mailto:david@canadianworker.coop)). Deadline for both awards is August 27, 2010.

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## Dedicated Long Term CWCF Board Member Stepping Down



April Bourgeois, the Prairies, NWT & Nunavut Director at the CWCF, has stepped down from the Board. The former CWCF Chair has been on the Board for 14 years. In all those years she only missed one Board meeting! She was a co-founder and publisher of Hullabaloo Publishing (prairie dog and Planet S magazines). More recently she has been with Co-op Ventures. Currently, she is on the Board of CICOPA, the international worker co-op association.

Bourgeois has recently taken a position at the SaskMetis Economic Development / Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation. Thanks and all the best April! The Prairies Board seat will remain vacant and be up for election at the AGM.

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## CWCF Member Benefits - Savings On Courier, Long Distance Calls and More!



Being a member in the CWCF allows you to access big time savings through the Credit Union Central of Canada working in partnership with the CCA.

For example:

-Courier - Purolator: Receive preferred rates given to the Canadian co-operative and credit union systems.

-Long Distance Calls - MTS Allstream: 1.9¢ per minute for all long distance and toll free calls,

anytime and anywhere in North America.

-Cell Phone Plans - Bell Mobility: 250 anytime local minutes \$30/month.

Learn at [david@canadianworker.coop](mailto:david@canadianworker.coop).

Stay tuned for a CWCF group benefit plan announcement.

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## Baseline Graphics - Was Converted into a Co-op to Treat Workers Better



Based in Vancouver, Baseline Graphics was incorporated as a worker co-operative in 1982. Baseline provides distinctive, effective solutions that meet your needs by providing you with quality consulting, design, copywriting and production services. They design work for print, display, the web and other electronic media.

Before Baseline turned itself into a worker co-operative, it was a private business. The workers

did not like the way they were being treated. They then found out that the owner was going to lay off the staff. Inspired by the natural and organic wholesale and bakery, CRS Workers' Cooperative, seven workers at the firm pooled together their money and took over the firm's lease and equipment.

When David Lach, one of the founders of Baseline, graduated with a mathematics degree, he decided to start a track and field magazine in 1974. This was in lead up to the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympics. With this experience he moved to Vancouver and was hired by a communications firm.

When Baseline was created, the goal was (and still is) for work to be enjoyable and to meet clients' needs. Starting out as a worker co-operative wasn't necessarily a smooth process. Lach says that the members argued like crazy in the first year. In the early days, Baseline had meetings every week for a couple of hours. After the first year two members left.

In time though the kinks were ironed out. Baseline now has 5 employees, 3 of whom are members. Since the employees have now worked together for so long and know their roles so well, there is little discussion or meetings like in the beginning.

One of Lach's fondest memories was surviving all the technology changes over the years in the industry. Baseline started out in type setting. The business drastically changed in the late 1990s with the rise of the Internet. The employees had to learn how to design websites to stay competitive. The first websites they designed were for the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and the Co-operative Housing Federation of British Columbia. Now 60% of their business comes from website design and 40% comes from print work.

Another fond memory was making the decision early on in Baseline's history to increase pay rates to market. This was a difficult decision because all members needed to have the necessary skills to justify charging clients market rates. Members needed to sink or swim. In the end though, the remaining members were being fairly reimbursed for their efforts.

As for the worker co-operative movement in B.C., Lach says that it is weak and that he has no contact with any other worker co-ops in the area. He noted that many worker co-ops over the years have been bought out, including the CRS Workers' Cooperative.

One of the reasons for this according to Lach is that it is difficult to start a workers co-operative because of the difficulty obtaining the necessary capital. Things have changed over time too. Lach says that nowadays you need more start up capital to compete, whereas Baseline only started out with about \$5,000.

"The worker co-op model makes it more difficult to raise money through its workers, whereas retail co-ops like MEC can raise significant sums. In addition, the B.C. Co-operative Act makes raising capital difficult, for you have to go through the securities commission, which is expensive," says Lach. To help the worker co-operative sector, Lach would like to see a provincial employee share options plan deduction for worker co-ops.

In preparation for retirement, in June Lach will be scaling down his work from full time to 2 days a week. As a baseline, Lach will be a tough act to follow.

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## Brierwood Design - Creating Apps For Your Cell Phone



Brierwood Design is a 3 member software worker co-operative based in Ottawa. Their success is from a combination of knowing each other really well and having decades of business experience.

Member Shawn Hyam believes that the worker co-op model provides a competitive edge for obtaining contracts because there is more assurance that the work will not be subcontracted, which is rampant in the industry. Brierwood can therefore assure its customers that the quality of its work will be high. Brierwood is known for creating a cell phone app, RoadRunner GPS, that keeps track of the distance, elapsed time, average speed and pace, and the calories expended during your run. In the future Hyam is hoping to create collaborative decision-making software, which could help individual co-ops and the CWCF.

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## First Cohort of Graduates from Co-op Management Certificate Program



On April 17th, 21 students graduated from the ground breaking 9-month Co-operative Management Certificate Program. Developed by the Ontario Co-operative Association in partnership with the Schulich School of Business, the Program consists of 5 core online modules, providing broad co-op knowledge, and the student's choice of two online modules

examining co-op sectors in more detail. Three two-day face-to-face residential sessions, held at York University, round out the program. Congratulations to Reba Plummer and Peter Cameron and all the other graduates! The 2nd cohort of the Program begins October 22, 2010.

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## Nor'West - Meeting Community Health Needs



Nor' West Co-op Community Health Centre is a multi-stakeholder co-op that works in collaboration with individuals, families and communities, to promote health, and enhance safety and well-being of identified populations in the northwest community of Inkster in Winnipeg. Using a multi-service, holistic and team approach, Nor' West provides a wide range of health related

services including medical care, counseling, education and community outreach. Nor' West recognizes the effect that life style, access to resources and income have on the health of individuals and families. Nor' West recently held its AGM on June 22nd.

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## Legacoop Moves Towards Creating Energy Efficient Housing



Legacoop, the largest co-operative federation in Italy, has signed an agreement (note: needs translation) with Climate House to create South Tyrol Energy performance certified housing. This is significant because Legacoop has 380,000 housing units in its federation. Climate House and Legacoop will work together to create sustainable architecture, conserve energy and reduce carbon. Last year Legacoop's President said on the ACT!

(Co-ops Addressing Climate Change) web site, "Co-operatives are the most suitable structures, all over the world, to foster the transition towards an alternative energy model. It is time to act!." That they have.

## Mondragon Corporation Posts Profit, But At The Expense Of Jobs



Despite a recession in 2009, Mondragon was still able to post a profit of 61 million euros. It was not easy though. To remain profitable Mondragon reduced internal costs, adjusted wages, relocated workers, and eliminated jobs. At Eroski, Mondragon's line of grocery stores, 5,200 (translator) positions were eliminated. In 2009, Mondragon provided 85,066 jobs, down 8.3% from 2008.

This was the largest restructuring in Mondragon's history. On the positive, a third of the jobs that were lost in the first half of the year were recovered. Construction and consumer durables were other areas that were hit hard. For the year Mondragon created 5 new businesses.