

Worker Co-operative Profiles



naturalcycle.ca

Multicultural Health Broker Co-op Ltd





www.careforce.ca

Wolfville, Nova Scotia

The member/employees of Careforce Home Care Worker Co-operative Ltd. are personal care workers who work under the supervision of a registered nurse. Staff is involved with meal preparation, housekeeping, personal care, respite care, palliative care, appointments and companionship, and any activities required to maintain individuals comfortably and safely in their own environment. Services are provided from two-to-24 hours per day up to seven days a week, if required.

The Co-op's typical clients fall into three categories. The first is independent living seniors in need of health care assistance. They typically require three or four visits a week. The second is clients recovering from a severe health event, such as an accident or operation that require assistance during their recovery period. Services can range from constant care to a few visits a week. The third category is clients requiring constant care (24-hour care) during the last period of life. The Co-op has been hired by families to provide care to patients in both hospital and nursing home settings, and is currently doing both.

Careforce Home Care Worker Co-operative is a conversion of a private health care services business. The purchase was financed through a very modest initial employee investment and by ongoing employee investment through weekly wage deductions, as well as through the dividends paid on shares purchased to date. The worker co-operative provides high quality services in the Annapolis Valley because the workers own and democratically control the business.

Awards

Careforce was the recipient of the Eastern Kings Chamber of Commerce 2010 Outstanding New Business Award.



www.lasiembra.com

Ottawa, Ontario

La Siembra means “sowing” or “planting time” in Spanish, a symbol for the seeds of change La Siembra is sowing through their co-operative and fair trade business models. Established in 1999 with the vision to connect southern cocoa and sugar producers with Canadian consumers in a sustainable manner, La Siembra has built a national brand of Fair Trade and Organic cocoa, sugar and chocolate products known widely as Cocoa Camino. With 21 retail products available in over 2,000 retail outlets across Canada, Cocoa Camino is the source for Fair Trade and Organic cocoa and sugar products. In addition to the retail products, La Siembra Cooperative sells bulk and industrial products to cafes, restaurants and industrial manufacturers. In addition they private label their products for the domestic and international markets, including the United States.

Camino’s 100 gram chocolate bars are Canada’s number one selling organic and fair trade chocolate bar line, and for good reasons! Unparalleled in taste and quality, their 12 mouth-watering flavours are sure to tantalize your taste buds. Their quality organic ingredients come from environmentally responsible family farmers and they strive to source these ingredients through Fair Trade practices.

La Siembra is in the process of expanding their product line to candy bars, juice, jams, and more. Sales at La Siembra have increased from \$47,000 in 1999 to \$6.1 million in 2010. Currently there are 10 worker owners.

Awards

- 2009 Worldwide award for the Most Democratic Workplaces
- 2008 Worldwide Award for the Most Democratic Workplaces
- 2006 The top co-operative award by the Conseil de la Coopération de l’Ontario (CCO)
- 2006 Awarded ‘Le coup de coeur du jury’ by L’ Association des manufacturiers du Québec
- 2002 First Canadian company to be awarded the prestigious Socially Responsible Business Award Today in conjunction with the 18th Annual Natural Products Expo in Washington, DC.

naturalcycle.ca

<http://naturalcycle.ca>

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Natural Cycle Worker Co-op Limited strives to promote positive transportation choices by making appropriate technology and resources available for individuals to live healthier lives. Created in 1999, Natural Cycle offers many different services.

Natural Cycle Courier offers citywide, all season local courier service. Natural Cycle is the only environmentally ethical document and parcel delivery service which guarantees that your delivery will be on time or its free. Today's leading businesses realize that the environmental impact of their company's practices needs to be reduced and an effort made to work towards sustainability. Business requires meeting deadlines, maintaining a competitive edge, and speed and accuracy in every operational aspect. Courier service users require the lowest rates possible without sacrificing the reliability of that service. Natural Cycle's 13 couriers are able to meet these needs.

Cycling is the most efficient form of urban transportation. One hundred bicycles can be manufactured with the energy it takes to manufacture one medium sized car. Also consider that when a bicycle is used for courier service rather than a car, the impact on the transportation infrastructure is significantly reduced. Natural Cycle uses only 100% post consumer recycled or tree free paper. This equates to approximately 30 Manitoba trees per year not being cut down in order to provide quality courier services. When you use Natural Cycle rather than car based courier companies, you are actively reducing the amount of climate changing and biologically toxic gases, such as Carbon Dioxide, Carbon Monoxide, Poly Cyclic Hydrocarbons, Nitrogen Dioxide, Nitrogen Monoxide, Sulphur Dioxide, Formaldehyde and Benzene, being released into the local environment. In 2005, Natural Cycle purchased a cargo trike capable of carrying heavy and oversize loads. Natural Cycle courier's cargo trike can carry up to 460 kg (1000 lbs.).

Natural Cycleworks is a commuter based bicycle retailer specializing in custom designed wheels and complete bikes. Natural Cyclework's expert mechanics can keep any bike functioning reliably year round.

Natural Cycle Distribution offers single speed bicycle components to retailers across Canada. Featuring: IRO frame-sets and hubs, KMC Chains, and more.

Prairybike Fabrication is a bicycle component fabrication and design company which is steadily gaining momentum.

Multicultural Health Broker Co-op Ltd

www.mchb.org

Edmonton, Alberta

The Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB) is a non-profit, worker co-operative in Edmonton, Alberta. The 40 women members, all from visible minority backgrounds, provide health-related services to immigrant and refugee families, especially in the areas of pregnancy, childrearing, and community development.

The co-op is a pioneer in the field of multicultural health brokering. Health brokers are trained community workers who mediate between marginalized ethnic Canadians and mainstream health providers. They take a community development approach that honours diverse cultural practices about sickness and health, and seeks to build both individual and community strength.

Incorporated in 1998, the MCHB serves new Canadians from China, South Asia, Arabic- and Spanish-speaking countries, Vietnam, Kurdistan, the Philippines, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia.

The co-op grew out of a demonstration project funded by Health Canada in the mid-1990s. The brokers were trained to work closely with pregnant immigrant women, who faced the daunting prospect of giving birth in a new city and within an unfamiliar health care system. The MCHB engaged with the women on many levels: visiting in their homes, speaking a shared language, providing interpretation services, and connecting them to health providers and support groups. During all such encounters, the brokers aimed to cultivate relationships of mutual respect and trust.

The MCHB co-op embodies a holistic, community-based approach to health services for people at risk. Their mandate is “to support immigrant and refugee individuals and families in attaining optimum health through health education, community development and advocacy support.” Implicit in their work is the knowledge that many immigrants and refugees face racism, isolation, and other barriers in Canadian society. The MCHB has a strong belief in advocacy with – supporting people to raise their own voices.

The MCHB’s interactions with the Edmonton moms has produced many tangible benefits:

- increased breast-feeding rates among participating mothers;
- increased immunization rates for their infants;
- development of pre-natal classes in various languages; and
- growing understanding among mainstream health providers of different cultural issues.



CETAM, Ambulance co-op

www.cetam.ca

Quebec

La Coopérative des techniciens ambulanciers de la Montérégie (CETAM) was the first of Quebec's six ambulance co-operatives. These co-ops are distinguished by being worker-owned, unionized, and very successful: they provide 30 per cent of the province's ambulance services, employ over 700 worker-members (plus hundreds of non-member staff), and in 2002 earned revenues of \$50.4 million.

The co-op's history is closely linked to the Quebec labour movement and its largest labour central, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN). The federation was itself co-founded by the Mouvement des caisses populaires Desjardins, Quebec's influential credit union movement. The CSN has a longstanding sympathy for co-operatives and, since the 1970s, has devoted strategic and financial resources to worker and housing co-ops. Today CETAM serves 70 municipalities on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, near Montreal.

Importantly, the CSN's support for worker co-operatives is balanced with its strong advocacy for public services. Quebec's ambulance co-ops did not arise in response to government downsizing or privatization, but an exodus by business owners. In short, the ambulance workers were not laid-off public servants, but insecure employees in a commercial market. The labour movement in Quebec has shown a dual commitment: to unionized public services and to unionized worker co-ops.

At CETAM as at other unionized environments, the terms of the collective agreement are monitored by shop stewards, who represent workers with complaints. CETAM units are harmonious workplaces, and formal grievances are very rare. Philosophically, the members are committed to "wearing the two hats."

Many obstacle had to be surmounted, not least of which was overcoming the apprehensions of workers with modest incomes and minimal savings that they could take on the new role of ownership. To capitalize the new co-op, full-time members each invested an initial \$1,000 (in "social shares") and then purchased "privileged shares" via a mandatory payroll deductions of 3 to 5 per cent (reimbursed upon retirement or leaving the co-op). Other financial support came from union and government sources, as well as the Montreal caisse (credit union). Clearly CETAM has shown that workers collectively can own and provide a high quality and valuable service to the citizens of Quebec.