

ALL ABOUT CO-OPERATIVES!



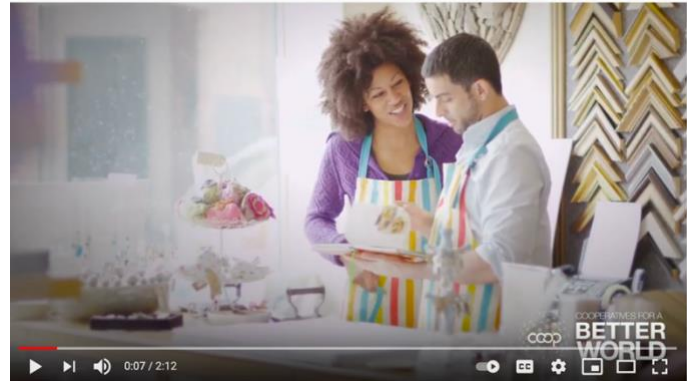
Find out why co-ops are a great choice!

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1. What is a co-op?

A co-operative (or co-op) is simply a business owned by a group of people who make decisions together democratically and fairly share the profits among its members. They operate on a set of fundamental principles that include equality, self-help, democracy, and social responsibility. There are nearly 9000 co-ops in Canada that employ 150,000+ people. They operate in every sector of the economy and *consistently outrank traditional businesses in employee satisfaction.*



2. What makes co-operatives different?

On the outside, co-ops look like any other business. On the inside they are very different because they are democratically owned and controlled by the members. Each member has an equal say in key decisions that affect the co-op – it doesn't matter how many shares you own or whether you are rich or poor – everyone has the same rights.

Co-ops are more about meeting a need in the community than they are about making big profits for investors. While they are often just as profitable as other businesses, co-ops share their profits very differently. Rather than give most of it away to those who own the most shares, they divide the profits among the members based how much each has used the co-op. In other words, the more you buy from your co-op, the more you get back at the end of the year!

Another key difference between conventional businesses and co-operatives is the principles and values they are based on. Co-ops around the world are guided by 7 guiding principles and a set of core values that include self-help, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

- 1 VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP**
Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all people able to use its services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
- 2 DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL**
Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members—those who buy the goods or use the services of the cooperative—who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.
- 3 MEMBER'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION**
Members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. This benefits members in proportion to the business they conduct with the cooperative rather than on the capital invested.
- 4 AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE**
Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If the co-op enters into agreements with other organizations or raises capital from external sources, it is done so based on terms that ensure democratic control by the members and maintains the cooperative's autonomy.
- 5 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION**
Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative. Members also inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperatives.
- 6 COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES**
Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- 7 CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**
While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of communities through policies and programs accepted by the members.

What types of co-ops are there?

There's a co-op for just about anything. They are in every sector and industry and can do anything a regular business can. If there is a need in the community, a co-op can be established to meet it! Here are a few examples of different types of co-ops in Canada. Click on any of the pics below to see videos of some of our co-ops!

Consumer Co-ops

Consumer co-ops are owned by the people who buy its goods or services, like food, housing, equipment, supplies, day care, and more. Here are just a few examples:

Housing Co-ops provide affordable housing to more than a quarter million people in Canada. The members are owners and have a say in the decisions that affect them. Housing co-ops mean that thousands of people have homes where they can feel secure and part of a community.



Local Food Co-ops are about people working together for better food, stronger communities, and a healthier world. The average co-op buys from 157 local farms and producers and sell far more organics than other grocery stores. On average, food co-op stores donate 3 times more to charity, pay higher wages and benefits for staff, and generate 1.6 times more money in the local economy.



Sharing and Platform co-ops provide affordable transportation and significantly reduce carbon emissions. *One carshare vehicle can take as many as 13 cars off the road and reduce carbon emissions by 33%.* There are many examples of what are commonly referred to as “platform” co-ops that use technology to help people share equipment, tools, and other resources.



Bike co-ops are becoming hugely popular across Canada. They provide a workshop space with tools, equipment and instruction on bicycle repair and maintenance, education about biking and safety, and organize fun events to celebrate the culture of cycling and to engage people in healthy outdoor activities. Many also rent bikes and donate them to people in need.



Producer Co-ops

Producer co-ops are owned by the people who grow/produce the products or services the co-op sells. They operate in all kinds of sectors from agriculture, forestry and fisheries to renewable energy, arts and crafts, and much more!

Renewable Energy Co-ops include wind, solar and other alternatives to fossil fuel. A group of citizens get together to pool their resources to establish these co-ops in order to reduce their carbon footprint, save money, and have a source of clean reliable energy for their community:



Agricultural Producer Co-ops are formed when farmers or food producers pool their resources to help them do things they can't do on their own, like manufacture, distribute, or market their products. This also allows them to diversify and bring new products to the market, like hemp, organics, and value-added products like frozen foods and vegetable juices.

Worker Co-ops

The main purpose of a worker co-operative is to provide employment for the people who work in the business. The workers are the owners. They pool their skills, interests and resources and operate a democratic workplace where every member is valued for their contributions and has an equal say in the decisions that affect them.

Worker co-ops operate in every sector of the economy and often help raise people out of poverty by providing employment, training, and decent wages and benefits to workers. (Check out stories about [worker co-ops all across Canada](#))



Social co-ops

Social co-ops are often, but not always, non-profits. They provide a service in the community often targeted to marginalized people.

There are hundreds of examples across Canada of social co-ops helping to address issues ranging from health care and homelessness to community economic development.



Multi-stakeholder/Solidarity Co-ops

Multi-stakeholder (also known as solidarity) co-ops are a type of co-op where there are different types of membership. For example, it could have workers, community organizations, and even funders who all have a seat at the table and work together to meet common needs.



Financial co-operatives

Financial co-operatives are just what they sound like. They provide some sort of financial services to their members like banking, loans, and insurance.

Credit Unions and Mutuals are financial co-ops. They are owned by their members who share in the profits and keep money circulating in the local economy rather than paying huge bonuses to CEOs like big banks do.

Credit unions and co-op insurance companies offer better service and have been consistently ranked above all other financial institutions ranked for outstanding customer service and employee satisfaction.



5. What difference do co-ops make for people and communities?

In Canada, 18 million people are members of nearly 9,000 co-operatives who employ 150,000+ people. They operate in every sector of the economy and can do anything an ordinary business can.

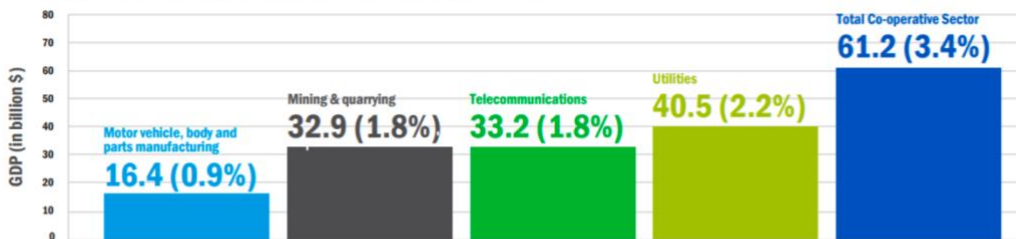
“You can be born in a health care co-op and buried by a funeral co-op. In between you can work in a worker's co-op, live in a housing co-op, buy your groceries from a retail co-op, send your children to a daycare co-op and do all your banking at a financial co-op. There's literally nothing you can't do through a co-op!”

Co-ops often provide critical products and services in small or remote communities where big box stores and large businesses can't make enough profit to bother with. They create jobs for local people and share profits with their members, which keeps money circulating in the community and builds the local economy.

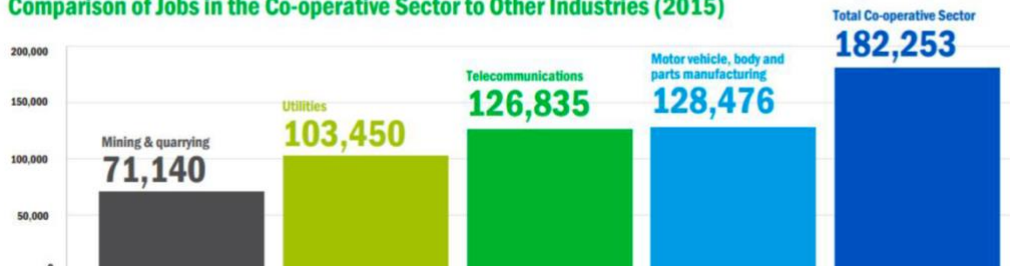


Studies have shown that co-operatives are nearly twice as likely to succeed. Following the 2008 financial crisis, co-ops grew at 3 times the economy in general and created 6 times as many jobs. There are co-ops in Canada that have been around for 100 year or more and continue to serve their members today.

GDP by Sectors in the Total Canadian Economy (2015)



Comparison of Jobs in the Co-operative Sector to Other Industries (2015)



Why might you want to be part of a co-operative?

There are lots of reasons people tell us they want to be part of a co-operative. They want to have a say in the things that affect them and a voice at the table. They want the opportunity to build innovative businesses by working together with others to make something happen they couldn't do on their own. They want to share in the profits that they help create and be part of an ethical movement that cares more about people than creating wealth for far-away shareholders. They want to be part of a community, build skills, and create a sustainable future for themselves. We could go on but we think you get the picture 😊

Learn more at <https://cecnb.ca/> or follow the Co-operative Enterprise Council of New Brunswick us on social media!