

Manitoba News Release

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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CO-OPERATIVES  
CELEBRATED IN MANITOBA

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Co-ops Strengthen Communities, Create Jobs, Provide Valuable Services: Irvin-Ross,  
Mackintosh

The United Nations International Year of Co-operatives was launched in Manitoba today at the Legislative Building by Housing and Community Development Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross, minister responsible for co-operative development, and Family Services and Community Affairs Minister Gord Mackintosh who celebrated the importance of more than 400 co-operatives to the province's economy.

"Co-ops provide a wide range of important products and services to Manitobans across our province," said Irvin-Ross. "From fitness centres and child-care co-ops, to grocery and hardware stores, to food processing and agricultural production, Manitoba's 800,000 co-operative members help make our economy strong."

"Co-operatives help build communities by creating jobs and keep wealth in the community by returning dividends to members," Mackintosh said. "They are especially important in rural and remote communities where they are often the only providers of key services."

The province has strongly supported co-operatives in the past and will continue to do so in the future, the ministers noted. Some of the provincial support has included:

- \* assisting in the development of the co-operative community strategy through partnerships with the Manitoba Cooperative Association (MCA) and the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM);
- \* providing advice and support to groups looking to form new co-ops, or transform an existing business into a co-operative;
- \* amending the Co-operatives Act so workers and consumers can combine their resources to create a co-op;
- \* creating a new Co-operative Tax Credit and providing startup resources to MCA to establish a fund that provides support for new and expanding co-ops;
- \* providing funds to support the Co-op Housing Community Mobilizer project, an initiative that generates interest in the development of new housing co-operatives;

- \* providing support through the Co-operative Assistance Fund for infrastructure and environmental initiatives;
- \* supporting the Co-operative Promotion Board and the Co-operative Loans and Loans Guarantee Board so they can provide co-operative organizations with grants for promotion and loan guarantees to encourage development and expansion of co-operatives;
- \* recognizing the achievements of post-secondary students enrolled in a co-operative or community development post-secondary program by awarding bursaries through the BUILDINGFoundations Bursary Program;
- \* establishing a Manitoba Co-op Research Fund to provide grants for scholarly and interdisciplinary research about co-operatives;
- \* developing the new activity book All For Each that is to be used by high-school teachers to teach students about co-operatives; and
- \* providing support to CDEM to co-ordinate the Youth Co-operative Services Program to help young people form worker co-ops.

"Co-operatives are formed to meet a local need or priority that is not otherwise being met," said Irvin-Ross. "They are locally owned and controlled and that means very high accountability to the community, ensuring activities are relevant and responsive to local needs."

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives, in recognition of the contribution of co-operatives to socio-economic development, especially with regard to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration. The objectives of the year are to expand public awareness, encourage the growth of co-operatives and strengthen the co-operative movement.

In addition to participating in the national launch of the International Year of Co-operatives, the provincial government is also partnering with the co-operative community to plan a number of events in recognition of this special year for co-operatives. More information about events that will take place throughout 2012 will be available at [www.gov.mb.ca/housing/coop](http://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/coop).