

Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation/

Fédération canadienne des coopératives de travail

Annual Report | 2017



Conference 2016



CANADIAN WORKER
CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION

www.canadianworker.coop/

Profile of the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (“CWCF”)

CWCF is the apex organization for worker co-ops in Canada. It was established in 1991. Offices are located in Calgary, AB, the Annapolis Valley, NS and in Winnipeg, MB. CWCF has a staff of four permanent employees (one in Calgary, two part-time in Nova Scotia, one part-time in Winnipeg). Its Board of seven directors provides stewardship. There are two “at large” director positions and representatives for each of the following regions: BC, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

Vision Statement

To be a growing, cohesive network of democratically controlled worker co-ops that provide a high quality of worklife, and support the development of healthy, just and sustainable local economies, based on co-operative values and principles.

Mission Statement

- 1) To work in solidarity with our members to achieve our Vision of a Co-operative Economy
- 2) To support the development of new worker co-ops;
- 3) To strengthen the Federation, to animate the worker co-operative movement; and
- 4) To represent and promote the Canadian worker co-op movement in Canada and internationally.

Membership

CWCF has 54 direct worker co-op members and many more worker co-ops affiliated as indirect members, through the Quebec Regional Federation members, *Le Réseau de la coopération du travail du Québec*, *la Fédération québécoise des coopératives forestières*, and *la Fédération des coopératives des paramédics du Québec*.

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[Note: in the electronic version of this document, the underlined blue text leads to hyper-links.]

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President's Report 2017

Looking Back

I have been on the CWCF board since 2010, and it was wonderful to have the opportunity to be elected president at the 2017 AGM. I have spent the year learning what it means to be president and how I can support the members, staff (especially Hazel, the Executive Director), and the Federation. It has been a challenging and enriching experience!

Over the past year the staff and board have been working diligently on all areas of the strategic plan:

I. To work in solidarity with our members to achieve our vision of a co-operative economy

In November 2017, CWCF hosted its 25th annual conference in Vancouver and despite some last-minute changes it was a great success bringing together 50 plus members, developers, and supporters of the worker co-op movement. The newsletter continues to be circulated regularly with a good open rate, a member survey was conducted, and we have been able to squeeze in a few member visits. We hosted several well-attended webinars including one on learning success from our failures that was so popular that we have included a workshop on that topic at the conference this year. At last year's conference we also adopted a new dues structure that allows co-ops to request dues relief or contribute more, as their co-op is able.

II. Support the development of new worker co-ops

We continue to work on forwarding a business succession plan to help retiring baby boomers transition their businesses to worker co-op. This is a struggle as the model is still so little understood in the business world, but we believe that there is potential for government money as the "silver"

wave crests. CWCF continues to offer technical assistance grants to worker co-ops to help with development (also accessible to continuing co-ops with issues to address), as well as extending the initial low membership dues rate of \$50 for an additional year.

III. Strengthen the Federation

The Human Resources committee has worked with the Executive Director to clarify job descriptions, workloads, human resources policies and practises, and compensation. The board itself is transitioning from an operational board to a governance board.

IV. To represent and promote the Canadian worker co-op movement in Canada and Internationally

In this area we have several approaches. Alain Bridault, past president, represents the Canadian worker co-op movement on the Executive Committee of CICOPA World. Stephanie Guico represents CWCF on the CMC board. Kelly Storie represented CWCF on the OnCo-op Board until she stepped down in October, and Sally Miller was elected. Hazel Corcoran was elected to The Co-operators' Board in April, 2016 continuing our very



active participation at that organization. A special thanks goes out to The Co-operators as their patronage dividends help make items like technical grants possible. Prairies' board member, Tommy Allan, will be travelling to Malaysia in November to attend the International Co-operative Alliance

conference and the CICOPA General Assembly, as will Stephanie Guico. We continue to enhance our relationship with the US Worker Co-op Federation by attending the related Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy conference in June and having them attend ours. With the help of Alain Roy, we continue to lobby the government for changes to the RRSP rules, preferential tax treatment of indivisible reserves, and money for co-op development. At long last the Canadian Co-operative Investment Fund has launched; years of dedicated work by many, Peter Hough in particular, has gone into this achievement. Congratulations! This will be an important source of capital for co-operatives across Canada, and the Fund will start making investments in early 2018.

Going Forward

We have worked hard with staff, board, and volunteers to present this year's Conference. We are pleased to have two senators presenting: Lucie Moncion and Murray Sinclair. Our program is a little different this year, with a full day Worker Co-op Management Intensive presented in collaboration with OnCo-op and the Réseau COOP, with support from an Ontario Trillium Grant and Meridian Credit Union. At the same time, CoopZone's Board is hosting a Co-op Developer Intensive Day across the river in Gatineau. CoopZone has also worked on a brand new strategic plan. This year at the AGM we will be reviewing our next strategic plan. We are seeking input from our members!

Thank you,
Reba Plummer

2016-2017 Executive Director's Report

Accountability Report, on our Last 3-year Strategic Plan

At our Wolfville, Nova Scotia AGM in 2014, CWCF set itself an ambitious Strategic Plan, which ends at the 2017 AGM in Gatineau, Quebec. We have set ourselves a huge mandate, though still with very small resources. We are committed to the Vision, Mission and Values of the worker co-op movement, and continue to believe that *tenacity works*.

What we have achieved, which is substantial, is to maintain a small, dynamic Federation which is sustainable, and we've made a difference to many worker co-ops.

However, what we seek to achieve in the big Vision is to grow this movement to have a noticeable impact on the economy; to empower significant numbers of working people to find social transformation through democracy in their workplaces.

We know what is required of an eco-system needed to build a large, dynamic worker co-op movement. The key elements needed in such a an eco-system are: (1) promotion of the worker co-op alternative, (2) technical assistance by qualified worker co-op developers, (3) worker coop-friendly capital, and lastly (4) after-care for worker co-ops, once launched.



Arguably, special treatment of indivisible reserves is required. We know that Quebec has more of these elements than the rest of Canada (though still not all that's needed); and Quebec continues to have 2/3rds of the worker co-ops in the country.

We have parts of this eco-system in place across Canada, but they have not been sufficiently

resourced in the course of this 3-year Plan, or not in a serious way. We continue to believe that in the current Canadian context, the best option for the resourcing of such an eco-system is government, most effectively the federal government but potentially also various provinces and municipalities. Foundations can also be a source of support, although we have yet to see much success there.

One key accomplishment (though not only CWCF's, of course) at the end of this Strategic Plan is that CWCF's strong support, over many years, of a coop sector-created Canadian Co-operative Investment Fund ("CCIF") has finally come to fruition.

At the same time, we have continued to carry out government relations work, and made a proposal to a Foundation, to try to obtain other elements of that eco-system, beyond capital. We know from studies done by our international worker co-operative federation, CICOPA, that the worker co-op movement is the fastest growing part of the co-operative movement, world-wide, though not yet in Canada.

In sum, *we continue to work in solidarity with our members to achieve our Vision of a Co-operative Economy.* There is an Appendix to this Annual Report which contains the details about what we have accomplished in our last Strategic Plan. We have appreciated being on this journey with our members, and look forward to its continuation in our new Strategic Plan.

Report on Specific Objectives Set for the Last Year

At the last AGM, we set nine specific objectives to work on between November 2016 and this AGM. Here is my report on the achievement of those.

1) Offer four webinars including at least one focused on The Co-operators' insurance programs: *We offered four webinars: Worker Co-ops 101 Part 1, Worker Co-ops 101 Part 2, How Learning from Co-op Failure Leads to Co-op Success, and Understanding Financial Reporting; click [here](#) for available reports. We also publicized*

to our members Co-operationWorks' webinar on Achieving True Accountability in Your Team. In lieu of a webinar on insurance, The Co-operators is presenting twice at our Conference, on November 2nd.

2) Conduct a member survey: *We conducted a worker co-op member survey in the early part of 2017. 21 people representing 19 different co-ops responded. We have used the results to help inform our strategic planning process.*

3) Offer a face-to-face member tour – Ontario: *Although not formally a member tour, our Board President Reba Plummer met with a large number of the worker co-ops in Ontario over the course of this year notably in Ottawa, London, and Toronto.*

4) Work with CCIF to meet the needs of worker co-ops: *Having been an early and active supporter of CCIF, CWCF is thrilled that the CCIF is formally launching in January, 2018. CWCF's retired Financial Officer, Peter Hough, continues on the Board of CCIF where he is Vice Chair. Huge thanks to Peter for his years of leadership and dedication to this! CWCF will remain actively engaged re: this Fund.*

5) Offer a cluster management exchange: *We did not offer management exchange sessions by region, but instead we scheduled the Worker Co-op Management Intensive Day at this year's Conference.*

Per last year's AGM commitments, some things we will continue to focus on have been as follows:

6) Website updates and improvements: *Improvements have been made throughout the year. We have plans for additional updates including more resources and links in collaboration with some dynamic new partners, as well as a multi-media section.*

7) RRSP program: *The program continues to grow, though primarily with co-ops other than worker co-ops since the 10% rule means only*

larger worker co-ops can use the program. We completed a major overhaul of our RRSP Administration Manual and have continually improved our processes. We now have \$61.8 million under administration in both RRSP's (primarily) and TFSA's with over 3,300 contract holders.

8) Membership recruitment and support: On membership, we have held steady in numbers at 54, but have started to approach new members. Re: support, we have provided assistance to a variety of our members and to start-ups. We increased the amount in the Technical Assistance Micro-grant program.

9) Tenacity Works Fund: This Fund started as a Pilot Project in 2000. Since the Pilot period, Tenacity has continued to fulfill its mandate of providing financing to worker co-ops and related sectors. In 2016-17, the Fund made placed one loan, in the Real English Victoria Language Co-op. The Fund is currently considering another investment.

The Fund has investments and cash of just under \$500,000, and the cash currently held by the Fund is about just over \$400,000. At the CWCF AGM in

2012 the membership pledged an investment from Tenacity into the CCIF. The pledged amount is now at \$250,000. Worker co-ops seeking loan capital are encouraged to apply to the TW Fund for loans of between \$15,000 - \$50,000.

Lastly, we have worked on this additional new project:

The MARK GOLDBLATT PROJECT: Arts and Culture Worker Co-op Grant

CWCF's Past President Mark Goldblatt, who died suddenly in February, 2015, was a strong believer in worker and other co-operatives for societal transformation. We were very touched to learn that Mark had bequeathed \$25,000 to CWCF "for a cultural project(s) in support of the co-op movement". We received the bequest last year. Although we are still working out the details, the Board has decided to place \$500 - \$1,000/ year in a youth cultural project regarding worker co-ops, starting this year.

Lastly, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the very dedicated and engaged board members, staff members and volunteers of CWCF for all you've done throughout the year.



Financial Report

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures
Year Ended August 2017

	2017	2016
Total Revenues	\$ 348,534	\$ 306,192
Total Expenses	\$ 307,749	\$ 299,998
Operations Income (Loss)	\$ 40,785	\$ 6,194
Recovery /write-down	\$ (17,371)	\$ 1,750
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 23,414	\$ 7,944

*Statement of Financial Position
Year Ended August 31, 2017*

	2017	2016
<i>Assets</i>		
Current	\$ 656,654	\$ 608,902
Long-term	\$ 2,166,949	\$ 1,166,949
Total Assets	\$ 2,580,538	\$ 1,775,851
<i>Liabilities</i>		
Current	\$ 46,032	\$ 25,345
Trust Funds Payable	\$ 1,810,515	\$ 1,049,929
Mark Goldblatt Fund	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Total liabilities	\$ 1,881,547	\$ 1,100,274
<i>Members Equity</i>	\$ 698,991	\$ 675,577
Total Liabilities and Member Equity	\$ 2,580,538	\$ 1,775,851

ECWD NYC Spring 2017

By Tommy Allen

The Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy (ECWD) was an inspiring demonstration of how much engaged citizens and workers care about their community. There were hundreds of participants, and the program was 36-pages long. Canada's worker co-op community is less than a quarter of the size in comparison, but if you compare that per capita, Canada is doing really great.

The first surprise was that this program was bilingual, (English and Spanish) and most of the sessions included live translation into Spanish via headset, and that work was contracted to a local NYC translation worker co-op.

The tour of Brooklyn worker co-ops included a grocery store, a co-op incubator, and a hospital.

The plenary sessions/keynotes were very engaging panel discussions about "Building Power Together" and "Transforming our Cities". The discussions touched on everything from race, poverty, and how to convince mayors about the importance of co-ops. One thing that was never stated explicitly, was that both of these discussions were led and paneled only by women.

It was a conscious choice by the conference planners, and speaks to the power of the cooperative model to empower those that work at a disadvantage in the typical white-male dominated capitalist system.

Throughout the sessions, it became apparent that there is a big different between Canada's cooperative world and that of the United States. Canada has a clear-cut Cooperative Act, which varies from province to province, whereas the United States does not have a very consistent approach to the legal formation of co-ops. Cooperatives are *not* regulated by individual states, as they are regulated and sometimes financially supported by provinces in Canada. Rather in the US they receive support from various regional groups or city-supported organizations. Overall, it seems that the best course of action for a U.S. citizen is to convince their mayor of the importance of co-ops.

Some other topics included Platform Cooperativism, engaging youth in co-operatives (Toxic Soil Busters!), and some management

strategies to deal with conflict and engaging members.

All in all, it was a great Conference! As a relatively new Board member at CWCF, it

provided me with connections to the US movement, inspiration, and new learnings to take back to the worker co-op movement in Canada.

CoopZone Developers' Network

CWCF has partnered closely with the **CoopZone Network of Co-operative Developers** over the years. CWCF has had a contract to provide support services to CoopZone. We've co-hosted Conferences and various webinars, and CoopZone members have a limited number of votes at our AGM. Although such members cannot run for the Board and the member class has only a total of five votes in AGM -- are automatically CWCF members in the WC Developer Member class. Various CWCF members have taken the CoopZone training program.



It should be noted that CWCF will cease providing administrative services to CoopZone in early 2018, as CoopZone seeks to grow more dynamically than is possible with CWCF managing and having its focus squarely on worker co-ops. This is a mutually agreeable change, and it is expected that although the relationship will shift significantly, a close relationship between CWCF and CoopZone will continue.

RRSP-TFSA Program

CWCF administers Registered Retirement Savings Plan ("RRSP") and Tax-Free Savings Account ("TFSA") and investments on behalf of its members and associate members, in conjunction with Concentra Financial. The program continues to grow primarily through the participation by Associate Members. These participants are primarily drawn from the Community Economic Development Investment Funds or "CEDIF's" (and related programs), Opportunity Development Co-operatives, and renewable energy co-operatives. Unfortunately, since the regulatory changes in

2011, it has been much more difficult for worker co-ops to meet the eligibility requirements. The program currently has over 3,300 contracts and \$61 million under administration. This represents significant growth in both assets under administration and contracts from the prior year. The RRSP program is a net income generator for the Federation and comprised 51% of CWCF's total revenue in 2017. For more, see: [\(http://canadianworker.coop/funding/rrsp-program/\)](http://canadianworker.coop/funding/rrsp-program/)

Membership in Related Associations

The CWCF actively supports the worker co-op sector by building bridges to, and participating in, other key partner organizations.

- National:** CWCF is a member of Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC), the national, bilingual organization for all co-operative sectors which was launched approximately four years ago, as a result of the effective merger of the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) and *le Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité (CCCM)*. Hazel Corcoran served on the Board of CMC, first as an appointee and then having been elected in June, 2014 at the Moncton AGM of CMC. Hazel did not re-offer in June 2017, however, CWCF nominated Stephanie Guico as our representative who was subsequently elected. Yuill Herbert is CWCF's delegate to CMC, and Peter Hough is on the CMC's Canadian Co-op Investment Fund Committee. CMC's June, 2017 AGM took place in Ottawa. In addition, our Communications Manager Kaye Grant was elected to the Board of the Canadian CED Network.
- International:** CWCF is a member of CICOPA, the international organization of worker co-ops. Past President Alain Bridault is in his sixth year as member of the Executive Committee of CICOPA.
- CICOPA-AMERICAS:** CWCF is also a member of CICOPA-Americas region and the North America sub-region. At both levels, the purpose is to exchange information about the worker co-op sector, associate federations across borders and plan government relations positions. The North America sub-region has been inactive, but we understand that the US FWC has plans to reinvigorate it. The CICOPA-Americas region held its fourth meeting in Ixtapa, Mexico in mid-October, 2017.



Regional Connections

CWCF continues to stay in touch with worker co-op development in all regions of the country, continuing our active relationship with the worker co-op federations in Quebec, where *le Réseau de la coopération du travail*, the Quebec Forestry Co-op Federation and Quebec Paramedic Co-op Federation are regional federation members. CWCF is a member of all of the Anglophone Provincial Co-op Associations which it is eligible to join, and has either a delegate or a director involved in each; some are CWCF board or staff and others are members. In Quebec, all three of the worker co-op federations are members of *Le Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité ("CQCM")*, and are represented on the CQCM Board by Isabel Faubert Mailloux (le RESEAU COOP), Jocelyn Lessard (Forestry Co-op Federation), and Alain Gaudreau (Paramedic Co-op Federation).

Statement on the Co-operative Identity

The Statement on the Co-operative Identity is central to the identity of CWCF and of our movement. You can find the full Statement, including the co-operative values and principles, here: <https://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

Staff



**Hazel Corcoran – Executive
Director, Calgary, AB**



**Kaye Grant -
Communications
Manager, Winnipeg, MB**



**Kristin Glenn - RRSF
Program Manager and
Bookkeeper, Kentville,
NS**



**Josh Dyke - RRSF
Program Assistant,
Kentville, NS**



**Kenzie Love - Executive
Assistant, Calgary AB**

Board

CWCF completed its 26th year stewarded by its team of directors. During the 2016-2017 year, the Board members were:

1. Reba Plummer, President, (Urbane Cyclist) - Ontario Director
2. Eric Tusz-King, Vice President (Aster Group Environmental Services Co-operative) - Atlantic Director
3. Lee Fuge, Treasurer (International Women's Catering Co-op) BC/Yukon Director
4. Tommy Allen, (Urban Eatin' Worker Co-op) - Prairies/NWT/NU Director
5. Jessica Provencher, (le Réseau de la coopération du travail du Québec) - Quebec Director
6. Yuill Herbert, (Sustainability Solutions Group) - At-large Director

Board Biographies

Reba Plummer, President, and Ontario Director



Reba lives in Toronto and is the Ontario Region Director. She has worked at Urbane Cyclist Co-operative since 1999. She completed the Co-op Management Certificate through On Co-op at the Schulich School of Business in April of 2010. She has been a member of the Toronto cycling community since the mid 80s, and was the 1999 and 2008 Cycle Messenger World Champion (cargo bike racing division). In 2002, she worked as the mechanic/teacher with Open Roads, the funded version of what became the popular volunteer-run Wenches with Wrenches. She joined the CWCF

board in 2010.

Eric Tusz-King, Vice-President, and Atlantic Director



Eric is a member of Aster Environmental Services Co-operative in Sackville, New Brunswick. Previously Eric was a founding member and manager of EnerGreen that was created in 2006 to help homeowners to have energy efficient homes. He has initiated, encouraged and/or been a member of several different types of co-operatives. The most recent initiatives are Beauséjour Renewable Energy Co-operative, an investment co-operative in community solar and wind renewable energy projects and Open Sky Co-op, a solidarity co-op that provides residence, vocational and social support for people who face barriers due to mental health or social development. Eric also works part-time as a co-operative developer with the Co-operative Enterprise Council of New Brunswick. Recently Eric became the Course Director for the CoopZone Training Program. He is currently the CWCF Atlantic Board Director.

Lee Fuge, Treasurer, and BC / Yukon Director



Lee has been involved in the co-op movement for over thirty years. She is a founding member and administrator of the International Women's Catering Co-op (IWCC), a worker co-op offering international cuisine. IWCC is a seasonal, part time business – 90% of the co-op's revenue is generated in the farmer's market season (May-October). Lee lives in Victoria where she is involved in projects focused on food security. She is chair of the board of the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable

Society (CR-FAIR), the "backbone" organization focused on food and agriculture issues in the Capital Region. She also serves on the board of LifeCycles Project Society which works to create community through educating about sustainable urban food production, processing and sharing.

Tommy Allen, Prairies/ NWT/ NU Director



Tommy's experience with co-ops began with Urban Eatin' Landscapes, a Winnipeg-based landscaping worker co-op that started in 2009, focusing on creating gardens for food and habitat. Driven by an interest in sustainability and holistic approaches to community and the environment, Tommy studied landscape architecture and urban design at University of Manitoba, graduating in 2015 with his Bachelor's of Environmental Design. He has worked as a freelance web/graphics designer, and

although he is often the one others ask for help in regards to technological issues, he is happiest learning outside and solving problems that interface more directly with our environment. As the office coordinator

of Urban Eatin' he has gained a basic understanding of business and worker co-ops, and is enjoying learning more about the significant effects of democracy at our workplaces.

Jessica Provencher, Quebec Director



Feeling fortunate to have found an entrepreneurial model that matched her values, Jessica became involved in the co-op movement seven years ago. Strongly driven by the art of hosting and facilitation, she uses every meeting like a learning occasion work better together. Besides serving pints at La Barberie, a 20 year old worker co-op microbrewery based in downtown Québec City, she is also involved as a director for the RESEAU and the CWCF, volunteers for the Québec microbrewers association, chairs the Co-Operators'

Québec regional committee and is following a master program in developing people and organizations at Université Laval.

Yuill Herbert, At-Large Director (from Atlantic Canada)



Yuill is from Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia and is a CWCF Board Director At-Large. He helped found the environmental consulting worker co-operative Sustainability Solutions Group that currently has members across Canada. SSG has worked for every level of government, major universities and a wide range of private sector and non-profit organizations on sustainability building projects, organizational sustainability and community planning.

2017 Conference Acknowledgements

CWCF would like to sincerely thank all sponsors (last page) without whom the Conference would not be possible, the Planning Committee members, and other supporters who have contributed to the success of the Conference in 2017, which was co-organized with CoopZone and the Réseau COOP. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help at this year's Conference, especially the following 2017 Conference Planning Committee members for their many contributions:

- Reba Plummer, Urbane Cyclist, Toronto, ON, Chair
- Jessica Provencher, La Barberie/ Le RÉSEAU COOP, Quebec, QC
- Ian Marsh, Brierwood Co-operative, Ottawa, ON
- Kelly Storie, La Siembra, Ottawa, ON
- Pascal Billard, CoopZone, Alfred, ON
- Hazel Corcoran, CWCF Executive Director, Calgary, AB
- Kaye Grant, CWCF Communications Manager, Winnipeg, MB
- Kristin Van Hattem, CWCF RRSP Program Manager and Bookkeeper, Kentville, NS
- Josh Dyke, CWCF RRSP Program Assistant, Halifax, NS

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