

Youth presence in Canadian co-operatives

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Abstract

Young people have been integrated into the Canadian co-operative movement throughout its history, through various programs, and to varying degrees. However the current succession challenges that face co-operatives and all types of business, increases the need for identifying and developing ways to integrate young Canadians into co-operatives, and to begin now. The objective of this project was to develop a community-based co-operative with a youth membership to deliver educational services about co-operatives to their peer groups. It was quickly realized that a more macro-level approach needed to be taken to create an environment for the involvement of young people. The involvement of young Canadian's in co-operatives was analyzed through three areas: education, employment and empowerment, all supported by research and youth input as being the most relevant areas for integration. Canadian co-operatives face additional obstacles for youth integration because the co-operative sector is not widely understood or promoted amongst much of the general public, therefore, this project also examines the role that can be played by the Canadian Co-operative Association, and the collaboration and ownership that must be take by all co-ops in Canada to ensure that values and contributions of co-operatives are not lost to Canadian communities.

Executive Summary

Co-operatives have a long, diverse and integrated history throughout Canada. Since the early 1900s co-operatives have provided solutions to community needs, have provided people with economic and social opportunities and have been an alternative business and community economic development tool. Communities throughout Canada are in a time of change and the economic tools and practices that have been used and regarded as ‘the best’ for decades are now being challenged. Additionally, Canada, like many developed economies has an aging population, with large numbers of retirements expected over the next five to seven years. This raises the question of leadership and involvement in Canadian co-operatives because co-operatives are generally not well understood by the public, and the co-operative model has many different forms and can be applied at many different scales.

To address the challenges of youth integration into Canadian co-ops, this project takes a policy focus and generally examines the youth demographic, between the ages of 18 and 25, across Canada. An analysis of needs and opportunities for youth integration into Canadian co-operatives has occurred by examining current programs, opportunities and gaps in the areas of education, employment and empowerment, and by making some recommendations for ways that further youth involvement can occur in each of these areas. Overall, there is a great range in the size, scope and target demographic that existing programs address, and in an effort to support the initiatives that currently exist and to build upon them. Additionally, a coordination role for the Canadian Co-operative Association has been examined, as well as the involvement and ownership that will be required by all existing co-operatives, in an effort to bring about systemic change.

Some of the most immediate goals coming out of this project include, conducting a mapping of the existing educational, employment and empowerment opportunities that are available to young people and to develop a National Youth Caucus made up of young people, existing co-operatives, academics and students, that will work together and bring forward suggestions for national initiatives that can be taken to make youth involvement a priority and a reality.

The need for greater education and awareness is the foundational conclusion resulting from this project. To ensure that young people seek out co-operatives as employers, as product and service providers or as organizations where they can become involved in the democratic processes, everything leads back to an increased need for education—formal and informal and for multiple age groups and across multiple subject areas.

Overall, the aim of this project was exploratory, with the intention to provide a preliminary examination of the environment in which the co-operative sector and young people are operating, the successes that can be built upon, the gaps that exist and the opportunities that have yet to be addressed. There is a lack of formal research about the points of entry into co-operatives, the way in which young people identify with co-operatives and the benefits that the sector receives from their integration, however, this project does attempt to provide an initial analysis of this and certainly identifies areas and opportunities for further research to occur. Finally, the purpose of this project was not to concentrate on the negative or what does not currently exist, but rather to conduct and share an initial examination of how similar the needs and interests of young Canadians are across the country and to highlight and propose areas of opportunity.

Please note: This project reflects upon the initiatives and opportunities that are available to Anglophone Canadians. This paper does not explore in detail the education, employment or empowerment opportunities available to young people in Quebec or involved in the *mouvement Desjardins*. Further research should be done to make this analysis more inclusive, and increase relevant connections for opportunities and future developments between Anglophone and Francophone Canadians.

I. Community Needs Assessment

The target ‘community’ involved in youth engagement in co-operatives is not defined by a specific geographic region, rather, the community in this sense is demographic and the emphasis is on trends that affect young people in Canada.

The 2007 United Nations World Youth Report acknowledges that developed market economies have made considerable progress over the years in addressing issues that impact young people, particularly in the areas of primary and secondary education, basic healthcare, and access to communications and information technology. However, the report also recognizes that significant differentials in youth development opportunities still exist within and between developed market economies and these inequalities are most often attributed to factors of class, race, ethnicity, gender and migrant status (United Nations, 2007, 201). The report also noted that barriers in employment and education create a need for policies that increase accessibility, build youth potential and open doors to youth participation.

With a population of more than 33 million people, and a geography that is as diverse as it is large, the assessment of the Canadian community examines trends seen and experienced by young people between the ages of 15 and 24. This group makes up approximately 13% of the population, and although the co-operative sector has a much wider definition of young people (ranging from 15 to 30, 35 and 40 years of age), Stats Canada and other government ministries presenting demographic information define youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24. From the research available on overall trends experienced by young people, it would be of value to do specific research on the impacts of these trends in urban and rural communities in each of the provinces and territories across the country. Trends impacting Canadian youth will be examined from three topic areas: education, employment and volunteerism/empowerment.

Education

Access to quality education is a great opportunity available to young people in Canada, and it is recognized as an essential building block for youth development and a resource that can allow for increased opportunities in the labour market and a higher standard of living.

The 2007 UN World Youth Report noted that young people in developed market economies have the highest level of education in history, however in many ways the pursuit of post secondary education can be a source of division and a marker of socio-economic status. Post-secondary education is expensive, and both tuition fees and living expenses can limit the options that young people are able to pursue (United Nations, 2007).

To facilitate the cost of post secondary education, young people are in need of government and private loans. A study by Stats Canada looked at the college and university undergraduates from the graduating class of 2000. More than 40% of college and university students required government loans to assist with the cost of their education and the average debt of these individuals upon graduation was between \$12,500 to \$19,200 for college graduates and \$19,300 to \$32,200 for bachelor degree grads (Allen & Valliancourt, 2004). The economic burden of this debt has rippling implications on the opportunities that graduates are able to pursue once they enter the labour market.

Further, the challenges surrounding education are not as simplistic as young people wanting to have a post secondary education or to remain in school longer; increasingly the workforce is demanding that young people have college and university degrees. As developed market economies become more knowledge-based, the expected minimum or standard requirements for many jobs is increasing, making the requirement of higher education more and more common. It is estimated that 1.7 million jobs will be created in Canada between 2005 and 2015, and of these 1.7 million jobs nearly 70% will require a post secondary education (Lapointe, Dunn, Tremblay-Côté, Bergeron, Ignaczak, 2006). The ripple implication of this, is that as young people seek out ways to make themselves marketable candidates for jobs, they are caught, often remaining in school longer, getting multiple degrees or continuing on to the graduate level to earn more advanced degrees (United Nations, 2007). In some ways it is becoming a vicious cycle fueled by cost and access to opportunity.

Employment

The challenges and expectations of post secondary education have direct implications on employment and how young people gain meaningful employment, earn an income and become contributing members of society.

Canada, like many developed market economies, has an aging population with large numbers of current employees within 10 years of retirement. Stats Canada, estimates that between 2005 and 2015, more than 3.8 million Canadian will retire, leaving more than two times as many jobs open due to the retirement of workers than will come from the creation of new jobs (Lapointe et al., 2006). However despite the need to fill existing jobs with skilled employees, highly educated young Canadians continue to find it challenging to obtain decent and stable long-term employment. The 2007 UN World Youth Report recognized that many young people begin part-time employment, often in high school and continuing throughout their post secondary schooling. The primary sector that employs young people during this time is the retail trade sector, followed closely by the accommodation and food sector (Usalcas, 2005). Entry and part-time jobs in these sectors are often flexible, do not require a lot of formal training or experience and have a high degree of turn-over, making these jobs easy for young people to access (Usalcas, 2005). However, part-time job experience does not appear to create much of an advantage for young people, as employers continue to place greater emphasis on professional experience rather than educational attainment (United Nations, 2007).

In an effort to bridge the transition between school and work many young people are entering into sequences of short-term jobs and internships in an effort to increase their employability. Dubbed the “internship generation” (United Nations, 2007, 209), it is common for college and university graduates to have from one to three internships before being able to secure long-term employment. Internships can offer great opportunities for experience, networking and relationship building, opening doors for the future, however, they are often low paying and/or volunteer positions, once again limiting their accessibility to many young people.

Additionally, young people who have 5 or more years of work experience must overcome difficult hurdles to gain access to professional development and promotional opportunities. High

demographic pressure from the preceding more-experienced generation has prevented access to important professional development opportunities necessary for the sustainability of many businesses (United Nations, 2007).

In light of the current economic crisis, and the dramatic changes that are occurring with the labour market, it will be interesting to see how young people fare and how opportunities and recognition of their experience and education is regarded in the years to come.

Empowerment

The issues concerning many young people are reflective of their personal values and the global environment in which they have grown up in. From environmental conservation, to human rights, gender equality and self-expression, young people are knowledgeable and active in community volunteerism and development activities, more so than through conventional political involvement. The global outlook and involvement of young people is enhanced through the accessibility of the internet, other digital communication tools and social networking applications (United Nations, 2007).

Canadian youth between the ages of 15 and 24 have the highest rate of volunteerism of any other age group in Canada, with more than 55% involved in some type of volunteer engagement (Hall, Labby, Gumulka, Tryon, 2006). The activities that young people most often volunteer for include, coaching, refereeing, and fundraising, primarily through involvement in sports and recreational organizations, educations and research organizations and social service organizations (Hall et al., 2006). The experiences and opportunities of volunteer work provide young people with significant opportunities that are often not available to them through paid employment, these experiences include helping to organize, coordinate and supervise events, and groups, and learning how to engage groups. These are all skills that are directly applicable to the work place and help young people to gain relevant experience.

Through an examination of the education, employment and empowerment trends that are impacting young people in development market economies and specifically in Canada, it is evident that there are many barriers and obstacles that young people face. The trends also bring

evidence that there are gaps in the opportunities and unmet needs amongst young Canadians. Canadian co-operatives are in a place of great opportunity to engage with young people and to provide opportunities and awareness of the co-operative model. The alignment between co-operative values and principles and the diversity of co-operative applications are significant advantages that can facilitate positive changes in the involvement of youth in Canadian co-operatives.

II. The Problem

Statement of the Problem

A common buzzword of the last few years has been “succession planning”. The term succession planning is used often and by many organizations as the Baby Boomer generation is aging and they are also looking at moving on to their next life stage—retirement. As more and more members of this generation approach retirement there is a growing feeling of unease as people of all generations wonder how organizations will evolve, and adapt or succumb to the changes that lie ahead. For all organizations, but particularly for co-operatives, generational learning and transition from the Baby Boomer generation to Generations X, Y and the Millennial is very important. The co-operative business model, has many different forms and is overall different, both in business structure and also in the fundamental principles that guide co-operatives. Therefore without particular attention paid to succession planning and the overall integration of more young people into co-operatives, as members, employees, and directors, there is great risk to the future of the co-operative sector as we know it today.

Additionally, and increasingly, the succession planning challenge for co-operatives is that very few people know about co-operatives, this is particularly true amongst young Canadians. Co-operative material is largely absent from education curriculum at all levels, with the exception of Quebec and while some areas of Canada have a higher concentration of co-operatives and credit unions in the community, many young people cannot articulate these differences. Therefore, the challenge facing co-operatives is much greater because they must address the challenge of succession planning while also attracting the talents of young people who know very little about co-operatives.

Another relevant unmet need within the co-operative sector is the creation of an environment that allows for an increase in the presence of youth within co-operatives, to make youth aware of the co-operative model and to make connections between all generations within the co-operative movement.

It is not enough to say that young people are the only ones impacted by this current problem, there are others as well. Young people are impacted through ‘imposed ignorance’, not knowing or being aware that co-operatives are an option, for employment, for business development and for the products and services that they purchase. Other demographics are also impacted in similar ways as young people because overall, the co-operative sector has not done a great job of externally communicating and educating people about co-operatives, and sharing their stories. Finally, those currently involved in the co-operative sector are impacted, particularly those who have developed co-ops or spent their career working for co-operatives, because this group is missing out on the learning that can occur between generations and being exposed to new innovations and to the refreshed excitement that people get when they become involved in co-operatives.

It is also incorrect to make it appear as though co-operatives have never thought about youth engagement and succession planning. In fact, young people have been a part of the co-operative agenda for many years, even generations; however, this engagement has not been consistent and has been of varying importance and attention over time. More recently, in the past 3-4 years, an increased number of co-operatives have begun to revisit youth engagement, with particular co-operatives, and sectors, such as provincial associations, and the credit union sector working to develop youth engagement initiatives.

Related to the challenge of youth engagement, and in many ways complicating the investigation into the development of youth and increasing the presence of young people in co-operatives is the actual definition of ‘youth’ The demographic referred to as ‘youth’ is not consistent throughout the co-operative sector, for example some co-operatives refer to youth as between 18 and 25, others include 30, 35 and in Canadian credit unions they go so far as to include those 40

and under as youth. Therefore the range of people included is very broad, which makes developing engagement strategies more challenging, as there are a great number of difference and experiences that occur in a person's life between the ages of 20 and 25, let alone between 15 and 40.

To address the challenges resulting from the definition, all co-operatives have a role to play, and in particular the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) has a role to play in co-ordinating and sharing the awareness of the initiatives that are currently taking place or being developed and to work with the membership to develop pan-Canadian initiatives and support material. The Canadian Co-operative Association is a multi-sectoral co-operative whose membership is made up of large co-operatives and credit unions across Canada. For example, the membership of the Canadian Co-operative Association is comprised of provincial associations, all of the provincial credit union centrals, large pan-Canadian co-operatives, such as The Co-operators and Mountain Equipment Co-op and other large co-operatives with over \$275 million in assets. Through the membership of CCA and the members of the CCA member co-operatives, CCA works to promote, develop and unite more than 8,800 co-operatives and credit unions across Canada and more than 17 million co-operative members (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2008). Throughout 2009 CCA is celebrating its centenary anniversary and to mark the occasion, four major events are shaping the year of celebration: the creation of a commemorative book, the creation of the virtual Canadian Co-operative Hall of Fame, a National Congress and the development of a National Youth Action Strategy. The youth strategy is the vehicle through which CCA aims to mobilize, integrate and engage existing co-operatives, the education system and the media to increase the presence of young people in co-operatives.

Target Community

With the project having a national focus, the target community is not a community in a geographic sense, but rather an opportunity to create a community within co-operatives for young people to be engaged, to learn about co-operatives and to continue and or initiate co-operative endeavors. As already mentioned, the definition of youth is inconsistent and spans generations and demographics with a great diversity of experiences, therefore the focus of this project is on young people 25 years old and under. It is however likely that this work will have

positive impacts upon older adults in co-operative (25-40 years) and additionally for other demographics.

The target of this project is to increase the overall presence of young people in co-operatives through education, employment and empowerment. For young people already involved in co-operatives, the goal is to increase the support and opportunities that they have, formally and informally within co-operatives. In addition, there is also another goal, which is to increase the education and awareness of co-operatives so young people not yet aware of or involved in co-operatives can become aware of the business model and also become aware of the positive impacts that co-ops have upon community.

Stakeholders

Group/ Institution	Role	Concerns	Expectations
Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA)	<p>Coordinate the youth initiatives that are taking place within the co-operative sector.</p> <p>Promote co-operatives to youth through CCAs networks, and to other relevant groups, such as government.</p> <p>Work with other existing co-operatives to develop materials or an initiative(s) to increase youth engagement in co-ops.</p>	<p>Resources—There is concern about the expectation of staff and financial resources that will be needed to fulfill the proposal and recommendations outlined in the strategy.</p> <p>Support—To ensure that history does not repeat itself, the youth strategy has to be owned and continually receive support and input from other co-operatives and credit unions within Canada.</p>	<p>That the national youth strategy will be a sustainable initiative.</p> <p>Both young Canadians and existing co-operatives across Canada will take ownership and become involved in youth engagement.</p> <p>Youth engagement in co-operatives will become more of a coordinated and consistent effort across the sector.</p>
Young Canadians	<p>To learn about co-operatives</p> <p>To work with other stakeholders to develop relevant, realistic and attainable suggestions and initiatives.</p> <p>To provide feedback on the action strategy and initiatives.</p> <p>Take ownership of youth action.</p>	<p>Stereotyping</p> <p>Being able to participate but they not having suggestions or input implemented.</p> <p>That ‘youth engagement’ and ‘succession planning’ are nothing more than current buzzwords.</p>	<p>Integration with current co-operators—the ability to take advantage of inter-generational learning.</p> <p>Opportunities to learn about co-operatives and to challenge or experiment with the model (develop initiatives that are relevant to them).</p>

continued Group/ Institution	Role	Concerns	Expectations
Existing co-operatives	<p>Need to make a commitment to youth engagement, financially, in their actions, policies, etc.</p> <p>Take an ownership position in the youth engagement strategy & have to be active contributors vs. passive recipients.</p>	<p>Be able to measure the return on their investment in young people—both through financial and non-financial resources.</p> <p>Exposing their co-operatives to new ideas and new to a new demographic.</p>	<p>That the traditions and hard work that they have put into building co-operatives will not be lost or forgotten.</p> <p>Young people continue to build and sustain the presence of co-operatives in local communities and across Canada.</p>
Provincial co-operative associations	<p>Utilize and build upon their existing youth networks (they have the advantage of being more integrated through the camp programs).</p> <p>Work and liaisons and ambassadors for co-operatives in their provinces.</p>	<p>Equal involvement and having a clear role when working with the national network.</p> <p>Resources to mobilize youth engagement ‘on the ground’.</p>	<p>Having a clear role in the strategy.</p> <p>Recognition of the initiatives that they have already implemented and participated in.</p> <p>Recognition of their input.</p>
Primary and secondary schools	Integrate lessons about co-operatives into curriculum material.	<p>Having to prepare a lot of material, especially on a topic that most teachers will also not be familiar with.</p> <p>Potential for schools to not be able to incorporate yet more content into the curriculum</p>	Having material that is very clearly linked with subject and grade level learning objectives.
Colleges/ universities	Increase knowledge about co-operatives, stimulate interest, and increase the research available about co-ops.	<p>How and in which programs to integrate co-operative content.</p> <p>Access to resource material to help students learn about co-ops.</p>	Critical mass of students interested in co-operative topics.
Other relevant organizations i.e. CCEDNet	Share best practices between CCA, particularly on youth engagement initiatives.	Having a constructive role when working with co-operatives there may be some feelings of competition.	Recognition of the ways that these groups are engaging with young people and how they are maximizing the resources available to them.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goals for this program will see the program forward for many years to come, the objectives have a short-term focus, primarily shaping the program between March 2009 and September 2009, when more background information will have been collected and specific initiatives can be brought forward and proposed for CCA’s 2009 fall planning session.

Project Goals	Project Objectives
<p>1. Increase the presence of young people involved in Canadian co-operatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a standing National Co-operative Youth Caucus, made up of members of co-operatives, and young people from various provinces, and co-operative sectors. • Develop and implement initiatives in the areas of education, employment and empowerment, in stages, beginning with a 5 year plan.
<p>2. To understand how it is that young people in Canada are identifying with the co-operative model. How have they come to learn about co-operatives and once aware of co-ops how they identify with co-ops, utilize the model, and share this information with their peers. Do young people see the co-operative model as a means for entrepreneurship and community development?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in quarterly meetings with the youth program managers from each of the provincial associations across Canada. • Conduct interviews/survey of co-op summer camp participants, interns and young employees of retail co-ops to understand how they came to learn about co-ops (Utilize the provincial associations to gather information).
<p>3. Create opportunities for young people already involved in co-operatives to remain engaged and active for years to come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a mapping exercise of co-operatives and co-operative associations across Canada to gather information on professional development and youth engagement initiatives that are currently available.
<p>4. Identify other tools and supports that can be developed to help young people connect with one another, to develop more co-operatives or to become involved in other co-operative initiatives. This could range from on-line forums and tools, to toolkits, sample business plans, financial literacy, governance training, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathered from the surveys and mapping exercise will identify gaps and areas where efforts need to be concentrated, so that curriculum material or training programs, etc. can be developed.

III. Design

In September of 2007, this project began as an initiative to pilot and test the feasibility of a worker co-op, comprised of a youth membership. The mandate of the co-operative was to develop educational workshops, presentations and material to deliver in the classrooms and at student leadership events of their peers (namely at the high school and undergraduate level). The group would specialize in workshops educating groups about co-operatives and delivering other trainings through a co-operatives lens, integration of co-operative values and principles into such things as student governance, communication or financial literacy training. Additionally, there was consideration to also market the services of the co-operative to existing co-operatives, by developing a 'co-op introduction' program for new employees. See Appendix A for the full version of the co-op proposal. As the idea for the co-operative developed and a proposal was submitted for money that would support a feasibility study, it became more and more evident that environmental structures were not in place to allow a group of young people in Ontario to move forward with the idea.

With new feedback and perspective about the context for young people to develop co-operatives, in Ontario, and across Canada, the focus of the project changed to a policy level, examining the actions that need to be taken to create an environment and structures where young people have both a greater presence in existing co-operatives and also have greater support for the development of their own co-operative initiatives.

The policy focus of this research concentrates on gathering information and developing initiatives in the three main areas that are found to impact the involvement of youth: education, employment and empowerment. These areas have been identified in both the existing research and also through the participants at the Canadian Co-operative Association's 2008 Youth Forum.

Literature Review

Such issues as the high cost of education, access to professional development and the gap between experience and recognition create challenges for young people in every sector. In the co-operative sector, these challenges are further complicated by a lack of public awareness about

co-operatives, a lack of co-operative education being integrated into academic curriculum and the unique way that co-operatives engage in business and community development.

Education

There is very little research that exists about education on co-operatives, the methods of teaching, topic areas covered and benefits to students. Overall, it is evident that there are many gaps in the research on this topic.

Currently in Canada, the majority of young people being educated about co-operatives are getting the experience through informal education, namely through the provincial youth camp programs. The number of young people who have and continue to annually participate in these programs is encouraging, however there is a lack of research on the lasting impacts that these programs have, the number of young people who remain in co-operatives in some capacity and their means of on-going engagement.

From personal experience, feedback from participants of the 2008 CCA Youth Forum, and a 2005 study by Lans, it is evident that there is a lack of formal education about co-operatives at all curriculum levels in Canada. As young people are learning about business and various business models and the ways that community needs can be addressed in their high school and university classes, the inclusion of the co-operative model as an option is a logical and necessary place of integration. Additionally, co-operative education has applications in other subject areas, such as history, the social sciences and increasingly in environmental studies. Recognition of the inter-disciplinary application of co-operative education can be seen through a partnership between The Co-operative Group and the Co-operative College in the U.K., which has been successful in integrating co-operative content into high schools. Beginning in 2003, a pilot program began with eight schools, one in each area of England and Wales, to develop Co-operative Business and Enterprise Schools and to offer another option for students as the government seeks to develop 'specialist schools' (Wilson & Mills, 2008) throughout the country. These secondary schools are based on a multi-stakeholder co-operative model with membership made up of parents, staff and learners, allowing for the integration of all the primary stakeholders. At the same time making a commitment to education has helped The Co-operative

Group and the Co-operative College address, “growing concerns not just in the U.K. but globally, that co-operatives had largely disappeared from the curriculum and become invisible” (Wilson & Mills, 2008, 12). The schools integrate the values and principles of co-operatives into all areas of study, from fair trade, to financial literacy, climate change and enterprise studies.

Complementing the development of these schools and their curriculum is a website, (www.school.coop) which provides a wealth of resources, including lesson plans and activities in various subject areas as well as information for students on how they can become involved in or begin a Young Co-operative program in their school—this is a program that helps young people start a fair trade consumer co-op in their school (Wilson & Mills, 2008). While the Canadian education system is a long way from reflecting this level of co-operative education into curriculum, there is a wealth of information and best practices that can be gathered from this work.

Employment

Meaningful employment during high school and college or university is a challenge that many people face across Canada. Compounding this challenge is the impact that lack of experience can have on job and career opportunities following graduation (Brown & Thakur, 2006). Relevant job experience and experience that sets applicants apart from the competition are key criteria when seeking employment, however, many young people are doing very similar jobs during their teens and early twenties, and few have opportunities to gain exposure to a variety of differential transferable skills. In an effort to counter some of these challenges young people are actively seeking ways to change their opportunities and to seek out those opportunities that match the dreams they are looking to pursue. One trend that is seen in many rural communities across Canada is the out-migration of youth to urban centres, where the perception of great opportunities and higher quality of life are very attractive (Gabriel, 2006). Unfortunately for many Canadian communities this is not a new challenge but one that they have been working to address for decades. Internship programs are one way to counter this trend, and 21 Inc. is a program, with one of its primary objectives being to retain talent in the province of New Brunswick. The initiative began through Next NB in 2004, was started by the president of the University of New Brunswick to begin answering the question, “What do we want for New Brunswick”? On an annual basis 21 young people from across the province participate in a ten-

month program combining education, mentorship, a provincial tour and networking with business and community leaders across the province. A similar program could be considered for co-operatives with an objective of retaining talent, and creating vision and change for Canadian co-operatives.

Research by Larson (2006) takes another approach to the connections young people have to their communities, and how these influences are reflected in their decisions and behaviors. Larson (2006) indicates that the abilities and capacities of young people have changed, and there needs to be recognition that “young people are motivated and able to be constructive agents of their own development... development involves more than preventing problems; adults are most effective when they support the positive potentials within young people” (Larson, 2006, 677). This is an important set of values for co-operatives to build on, and to see the value of interaction with and mentorship from adults. Also supporting this research are Zeldin and Macneil (2006) and Health Canada (1998), who have identified that both adults and young people have meaningful and positive experiences when working together in partnership in organizations.

In May 2006, Credit Union Central of Canada, developed a National Young Leaders Committee made up of young credit union professionals across Canada. The group has the mandate to increase the capacity and mentoring opportunities for young credit union leaders, while assisting the credit union movement to develop strategies and to become a desired employer for young people with an interest in financial services (National Young Leaders Task Force, 2006). The development of this task force is seen as, “...something that cannot be done in isolation of other strategies being pursued, either by credit unions, or the credit union system as a whole. As one thinks through these realities, it becomes more obvious that regardless of size, developing young leaders is going to be important for the system for many years to come” (National Young Leaders Task Force, 2006, 7). However, the challenge with this initiative, like with many others being developed by co-operatives, is that they are being developed in isolation and not through the promotion of the entire sector or with the complete co-operative model in mind.

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) has conducted a study of opportunities and barriers of youth in the labour market of three communities in British

Columbia. Although the information that was gathered in the study was applied to those three communities there were many findings that are applicable to communities across Canada and to co-operatives, as a business model within the area of community economic development (CED). Their findings included such parallels, as young people not having an understanding of community economic development and requiring increased education in this area and gathering interview responses like this one: “Many felt that CED aligns well with the values of young people... CED can allow young people to work where they live and invest in their community... the holistic CED approach can often foster a sense of belonging and meaning in work” (CCEDNet, 2008, 11). This study has connections to co-operatives, provides insight into the opportunities that young people see in community-based organization and offers best practices from like-minded organizations.

There are also examples of youth involvement in co-operatives through programs that allow young people to gain experience by introducing young people co-operative by applying co-operative development to meet their needs. In Ontario, the francophone provincial association, Conseil de la Cooperation de l’Ontario, is developing a youth services program for secondary school francophone students, during the summers they can set up small service co-operatives, offering such things as babysitting or painting services through a co-operative structure. They are supported in the development and taught about the co-operative model throughout the process (CCO, 2007). In Atlantic Canada, the MYDAS (Mobilizing Youth to Deliver Advisory Services) program was developed in 2005. This particular program trained teams of two university students, from universities in Atlantic Canada, to deliver co-op advisory services during their summer university breaks. Funding of the program has declined since its inception and now only one team of two is still working (MYDAS, 2007). The Core Neighborhood Youth Co-operative in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is a co-op that provides at risk youth with an opportunity to undertake economic projects with an environmental focus. The youth members are involved in gardening, bicycle repair and the production of outdoor furniture. It is through these services that the young people learn about the workings of a business and how to work with one another (Tupone, 2003). There are also a series of case studies that are presented in the book *Youth Reinventing Co-operatives* (2005) from all over the world, that are both inspiring, and showcase the many different ways that young people are identifying with the

co-operative model and seeing opportunities for employment, empowerment and community contribution through co-operation.

The example that was most relevant to the previous practical structure of this project was The New Practice in Vancouver, British Columbia. As of 2008 there were four worker-owners of this co-operative, all university students and all had participated in the BC youth co-operative camp program together. The service of the co-operative is to present workshops, primarily to high school students, about co-operatives and other topics, using the values and methodology of co-operation. The structure of The New Practice allows its members to meet multiple needs that have been recognized: education, employment, empowerment, partnership and skill development.

Empowerment

When it comes to the empowerment of young people the research available is once again not extensive but increasingly more examples are emerging of organizations creating and recognizing opportunities for young people. For example, organizations like le Conseil Québécois de la Coopération et de la Mutualité (CQCM), and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet), have developed youth boards and committees that work with and assist the organization in understanding, addressing and integrating the needs, interests and concerns of young people. L'Alliance des Jeunes Coopérateurs et Mutualistes du Québec, is the youth alliance of CQCM, and as of 2008, is a network of more than 100 youth involved in different co-operatives from across the province, there is a coordinating committee within the Alliance made up of youth representative from every co-operative sector in the province, and the elected President of the Alliance also serves on the CQCM board (Alliance des jeunes coopérateurs et mutualistes du Québec, 2008). Similarly, CCEDNet has developed the Emerging Leaders program, bringing together a national committee of young people to help inform policy and program developments in the area of community economic development (CCEDNet, 2008).

Sometimes viewed as a contentious issue, co-operatives and credit unions are increasingly taking a look at the involvement of young people in co-operative governance. Statistics presented by

Rogers, of the Filene Research Institute indicates that in the United States the succession of co-operative governance could be in jeopardy because, “ only 6% of directors from a surveyed group of 379 were under age 40, and only 25% were younger than 50” (Rogers, p. 4, 2008). While, there is not a comparable data set for Canada, it would be interesting to see how closely the make-up of co-operatives boards in Canada reflects this U.S. statistic. Unfortunately, the differences are probably very minimal, but there does appear to be a trend of more and more co-operatives having youth involved in governance. The contention or difference of opinion occurs between some people and organizations that feel young people on boards are present to offer perspective, gain networking and resume building skills but should not be eligible to vote. Others feel as though young people can bring valuable skills and knowledge, through their experience, such as education, and therefore allow young people to be full directors. Regardless of how young people are coming to serve on boards, it is obvious that there is a great need for this type of involvement, both at the present time and for the future success of co-operatives.

When it comes to knowing and developing ways for co-operatives to engage increased numbers of young people in co-operative education, employment and empowerment, there are many lessons to be learned and much research to be done.

Program Overview

Based upon an understanding of the urgency of the youth involvement problem facing co-operatives, and as part of the commitment and centenary celebrations, the Canadian Co-operative Association made a commitment to developing a National Youth Action Strategy to increase the presence of young people in Canadian co-operatives. The implementation of this commitment began in 2008, with the planning of the 2009 anniversary celebrations. Some initial funding was provided by the Co-operatives Secretariat for CCA and the national Francophone equivalent, le Conseil Canadien de la Coopération et de la Mutualité (CCCM), to work in partnership to organize a congress in Winnipeg. One of the events highlighting the joint national congress was a Youth Forum between young Anglophone and Francophone co-operators. In the morning, prior to the Joint Youth Forum, the Anglophone and Francophone youth met separately as both groups are organized in a different manner and to a different degree and therefore had separate business to attend to.

On June 25, 2008, CCA held a national youth forum with 15 youth representing each of the provinces in Canada, and presently involved in co-operatives through some capacity. The feedback and insight that was gathered from the 2008 youth forum, was analyzed and summarized into a briefing paper and presented to the CCA Board of Directors in February 2009, see Appendix B. The paper, not only reflects upon the material gathered from the youth forum but included a series of recommendations for the board to support between March 2009 and September 2009. The following five recommendations were proposed as short-term initiatives to undertake by the early fall of 2009, at which time CCA would have a better understanding of the existing unmet needs, examples of best practices, and avenues of entry to pursue in increasing the number of young people involved in co-operatives.

Recommendations

1. Engagement with Co-operative Youth Program Managers

Currently, the Co-operative Youth Program Managers, employed by the provincial associations, meet quarterly to share best practices and co-ordinate resources between their programs. CCA has been participating in these calls in an informal way, but there is an opportunity here to engage with this group in a much more formal manner, by becoming a standing and on-going participant. This means meeting regularly and working with this group to remain informed about their priorities and initiatives and sharing and gathering feedback about both CCA and provincial youth initiatives.

2. Provincial and sector consultation

Many of the provincial associations and sector federations are building networks of youth within their provinces. CCA needs to conduct a mapping exercise to determine the stage of development for each of these provincial, sector and member youth initiatives and to encourage the development of provincial networks that can be accessed and used as champions within their communities. Through the consultations it would also be important for CCA to liaise with the francophone youth network and the existing sectoral youth strategies, such as the credit union and housing sector initiatives, which are already in place.

3. Establishment of National Youth Caucus

The formation of a National Youth Caucus, co-ordinated by CCA would allow for on-going interaction and feedback between young provincial co-operators, the sectoral associations that are currently developing youth initiatives and established co-operatives who are making commitments to co-operative youth engagement. Additionally, it would be beneficial for this group to be made up one CCA board director, a CCA staff resource, an academic or student from one of the Canadian university co-operative sectors and a representative from the National Francophone Co-operative Network. This group of 10 to 15 would meet via phone or web conference, quarterly to share updates, best practices, discuss ways that they can co-ordinate their efforts and when appropriate provide recommendations to the CCA Board. The mandate

and Terms of Reference for the Youth Caucus will evolve once consultations and mapping has occurred with youth and more concrete actions and a more autonomous action strategy has been developed. The Committee would report to the Board and provide regular updates on its discussion and proposals for future activities.

4. Using New Technology

The participants of the CCA Youth Forum felt it particularly important to work on creating opportunities for increased numbers and diverse ages of people to network and learn from one another through virtual interactions. Many of the suggestions by the participants focused on the use of technology to carry out consultations and share best practices e.g. via webinars. Additionally, working with the provincial associations to consult with some of their camp participants would also be beneficial. The use of technology would be one key way of developing the education and engagement recommendations because overall, it is important to ensure that young people be active in a youth strategy, while working with and being supported by experienced co-operators.

5. Funding New Initiatives

Additionally, CCA needs to identify and explore ways to access funding and support to increase the number of young people that are able to access CCA, social economy and co-operative events that provide valuable opportunities for networking and professional development; such events include CCA's Annual Congress, the Institute for Co-operative Studies, encouraging staff to volunteer as facilitators for the provincial co-operative youth camp programs and the annual Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation conference.

Following the February 2009 Board presentation, the Board approved the CCA staff recommendation to allocate \$5000 to the Youth Action Strategy development and liaising with sector/provincial youth strategies for the year 2009/10. The use of the \$5000 will largely be dedicated to developing webinars and setting up Caucus meetings via conference call. One of the activities of the Youth Caucus will be to identify other funding sources from co-operatives (in the form of sponsorship) and appropriate federal government funding sources.

The outcomes of the recommendations will be developed into a few key action items for CCA and members co-operatives across Canada to work together on moving forward over a 3 to 5 year timeline. The follow-up and long-term recommendations are to be presented and discussed at the 2009 CCA Board fall planning meeting.

Participants & Community Role

To undertake a national policy level initiative, the 'community' involvement is not a geographic community, but is inclusive of the Canadian co-operative community. The co-operative community will have roles as participants and as stakeholders in creating a National Youth Action Strategy. The co-operative sector in Canada is diverse in the fields and structures of

involvement that are currently available. For example, co-operatives can be found in different size and in different quantities in nearly every sector of the economy. Take consumer co-operatives as an example, there are a thousands of consumer co-operatives in Canada, and they include financial co-operatives, childcare co-operatives, housing co-operative, funeral services, car share, grocery stores and outdoor equipment stores. To break it down further, there are co-operatives of varying sizes within each of these sub-sectors. The diversity of the co-operative sector in both size (revenues, assets, # of full-time staff) and sector can be challenging differences but there needs to be a shift within the leadership of co-operatives as to how this can be utilized to the advantage of the co-operative community and leveraged through cross-promotion.

Therefore as participants, the role of the co-operative community will be:

- To be honest and critical in assessing the current youth engagement practices of their co-operatives.
- To provide constructive feedback on the feasibility of youth engagement recommendations,
- And to challenge their co-operatives into thinking about how new members and staff become involved in co-operatives, what are the experiences or information that help people to understand and identify with co-operatives. This information will then help national, provincial and regional initiatives to be developed.

As stakeholders, the role of the co-operative community will be:

- To help identify and/ or contribute both staff and financial resources.
- To support sector or provincial representatives or to participate on the National Youth Caucus.
- Make youth engagement an on-going commitment of their co-operative, so that a National Youth Action Strategy is not a short-term undertaking but rather a long-term undertaking meeting the needs of the youth demographic.

Major challenges that are likely to be experienced by the project stakeholders are similar challenges that are experienced through many of the initiatives in the co-operative sector. Some of the most likely challenges include:

1. The largest of Canada's co-operatives may feel as though the sector is looking to them, to finance and to implement all of the initiatives, such as hire young people or make positions for them on their boards, create internship programs, etc. Therefore in all of the recommendations it will be important for clear roles to be established, consideration given to how recommendations can be carried out on various scales and utilizing and having clear co-ordinating roles for provincial and sector organizations.
2. Feeling that things are happening too slowly or without sufficient information. Further research needs to be conducted on the current context in which co-operatives are going to be trying to engage young people but also further research on the general benefits of co-operatives and their role in local economies.
3. Focusing too much on youth and not looking to at the connections to other challenges and resources that are already available. For example, the challenges of youth engagement are not isolated and in many co-operatives there is an overall challenge of member engagement and engaging diverse demographic into co-operatives. Therefore, it will be important to be critical that youth engagement recommendations are not too specific or carried out in isolation.

Host Organization

The co-ordination organization of a National Youth Action Strategy will be the Canadian Co-operative Association. Due the mandate and role of CCA, it is best positioned to work in co-ordinating co-operative members across Canada. The mission of CCA is to promote, develop and unite co-operatives across Canada and around the world. The youth engagement strategy has elements that directly relate and maximize the mission, with the key addition to promote co-operatives to young people not currently aware of or involved in co-operatives. In their coordinating role, CCA's most significant contribution will likely come from the commitment of time from a staff person, who will be the primary co-ordinator of the strategy. There will also be a modest financial contribution made by CCA. For example, CCA has currently committed \$5000 to the implementation of the short-term recommendations; however the majority of financing for proposed initiatives will have to come from sponsorship by member co-operatives or funding provided by federal government sources.

It would also be beneficial if there were on-going support from a member of the CCA Board and regular updates going to the board, for their continued support and inclusion. With the inclusion of a board member as part of the National Youth Caucus there would be an avenue for continued information and feedback to flow between the board and the caucus.

Method

As previously stated, the outcome of addressing youth involvement in co-operatives took a different form than initially intended. The change in the focus of the project occurred because of information that was gathered through the initial steps taken in implementing the youth worker co-operative idea. During the 2007-2008 academic year the following steps were taken to begin the process of developing a worker co-operative for young people, providing educational services:

1. Meetings were had with the Ontario Co-operative Association's, Co-operative Development Manager to discuss ways that a youth worker co-operative could be supported by On Co-op. On Co-op was consulted on the forecasted budget, on communities in Ontario to pilot the co-operative idea, and on the ways that a youth worker co-operative would complement On Co-op's work to develop a broader and more integrated co-operative youth engagement strategy for the province. The conversations, support and advice, was constructive and informative and there appeared to be many ways that both On Co-op and the youth co-operative could benefit from one another.
2. Recognizing the cost and limitation of mobility for young people, it was recognized that this co-operative would best be able to meet the needs of clients and the young member-owners by replicating the co-operative in multiple communities throughout the province. Three pilot communities were chosen to test the feasibility of the project: Guelph, Thunder Bay, and Toronto. Each of these communities is very unique and was chosen for that reason.
3. Tanya met with a consultant with a specialized interest in utilizing technology in organizations. The presentation of the proposal was well received as was the web-based coordination and communication between the pilot groups, with the idea of being able to expand the network as more of the educational services co-operatives were formed.

Through the meeting with the consultant it became evident that the format of the youth co-operative could essentially become franchised.

4. Initial research was done, searching for existing co-operative curriculum material and looking at various subjects and resources that could be adapted to workshop materials that the co-operative could provide. This was only an initial search, as it would be important for the group to be involved in the development of the material.
5. Through all of the consultations and meetings with On Co-op and others, it became evident that there were questions about the feasibility of the co-operative, namely, if there was a market willing and able to pay for the workshop services. A grant application was completed for technical assistance funding through the Ontario Co-operative Association to hire and work with a co-operative development consultant to assess the feasibility of the proposed co-operative. The grant committee turned down the application because they did not feel that there was a market to support the services being developed.

The outcome of the grant application was not a complete surprise, as the uncertainties of the grant committee had been raised by others and the more research that was done, the more evident it became that co-operative development is challenging but co-operative development by youth, for youth is extremely difficult because at the present time there is not an environment where development resources and supports are available to youth. The outcome of the grant request for the feasibility study was one of the key factors that lead to the project shifting from a community-based initiative to a national policy initiative. One of the items areas included in the policy/ strategy will be youth co-operative development and co-operatives meeting the needs of young people.

Products & outputs

To inform the next steps of the National Youth Action Strategy, CCA will be able to use the information already gathered from existing research and the outcomes of the 2008 Youth Forum.

The fifteen young people who participated in the CCA forum were asked four questions:

- Where do you see yourself in the co-operative movement in 10 years? (Ideal future)
- Where do you see the co-operative movement in 10 years?
- What are the barriers to co-operative youth engagement in Canada?

- Working in groups, participants were asked to prepare a timeline and estimate the cost of possible opportunities to meet the needs identified in the previous exercises.

From the responses to these four questions, the youth identified three areas where they saw themselves playing a greater role in co-operatives and, by coincidence these were the same three areas that had been identified in the preparatory research. The three areas, with a co-op specific lens, were:

Education

- A number of participants have been through the provincial co-operative camp programs or involved in them through some capacity and are looking to remain involved or to become more involved in the development and co-ordination of these programs.
- There was also interest in formal education and being champions for co-operative curriculum development at the primary and secondary school levels, as well as the development of co-operative and social economy programs at the undergraduate level and continuing programs at the graduate level.

Employment

- The very positive result that emerged in this area is that once young people are exposed to co-operatives, there is a great interest amongst them to remain working for co-operatives and to build a career within the co-operative community.
- The scope of the sector and its inter-disciplinary nature, from grassroots to national level involvement, as well as the diversity of roles and sectors within co-operatives and credit unions was a very appealing feature to the young people.

Empowerment

- Many participants are seeking to develop more training opportunities for young people, and also accessing and/or developing tools and resources for young people to develop their own co-operative initiatives.
- Participants also noted how important governance is to co-operatives and how fundamental and valuable board experience is within co-operatives. Young people are seeking more opportunities to learn more about co-operative governance and to take on a governance role with a co-operative.

While there was a lot of optimism and hope for the future amongst the participants of the CCA Youth Forum, the participants were also very candid about the barriers young people are experiencing in Canadian co-operatives. Barriers are also something that have to be considered and addressed in developing strategy initiatives. The identified barriers are summarized into three main areas:

Stereotyping

The discussion provided insight into how young people feel they are perceived and how they view experienced co-operators. Differing views on the value of experience, the value of learning (on and off the job) and the perception of innovation and creativity create barriers to communication amongst demographic groups within co-operatives and perpetuate the existence of stereotypes.

Lack of...

While experiencing a “lack of...” something, is not a new obstacle for co-operatives to overcome, the perceived list of things that can be lacking in co-operatives continues to impact the engagement of new and young co-operators. Some of the things that were identified include, a lack of resources, such as money, supplies, general information; a lack of time, for mentorship, succession planning and professional development; and an overall lack of money which makes it difficult for co-operatives to remain competitive options for young people.

Cultural barriers

- It is important to note that many of the challenges that were identified through this theme are challenges that are not uniquely experienced by young people, but are experienced by all demographics throughout the co-operative movement.
- Involvement and integration into co-operatives can be challenging because the principles and values that are foundational to co-operatives are often placed in great contrast to a dominant capitalist ideology of individual gain and growth.

Attending the 2008 CCA Youth Forum were young co-operators that are currently involved in the sector in a variety of capacities. Some have been involved for many years and others have more recently been introduced to co-operatives. This reflects the make-up of people of all ages within co-operatives. Recognizing and addressing this diversity was a topic that was woven throughout the Youth Forum discussions. The participants were very clear that a strategy for

co-operative youth must recognize those already introduced to co-operatives, as well as those who have not yet become involved.

Overall, the 2008 CCA Youth Forum was an insightful first step in identifying the components of a comprehensive, effective, and realistic strategy for young Canadians in co-operatives.

Logic Model

Long-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the presence of young people in co-operatives, as members, employees, educators, board members and co-operative entrepreneurs. 		
Intermediate outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people seeking out co-operatives through education, as employers and as business development opportunities. 		
Short-term outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support system and resources in place for young people to develop co-ops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment opportunities and specialized internship opportunities, such as a co-op version of 21 Inc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of co-op content into school curriculum
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-operative Youth Entrepreneurship Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development training series specifically for young people Develop a handbook and graduated system for young people in co-op governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a couple of subjects, and a few grade levels and develop appropriate curriculum material that can be integrated into the curriculum i.e. grades 7, 11 and 1st year undergraduate
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a mapping exercise and analysis of the existing programs and initiatives being undertaken by co-operatives and other like-minded organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form the National Youth Caucus, to brainstorm, advise and oversee a National Action Strategy for Youth in co-operatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with school officials at various education levels and assess how co-operatives can be integrated to meet current curriculum requirements
Inputs	Feedback on the opportunities and barriers young people face as articulated by participants of the 2008 Youth Forum.	Existing co-operative networks, such as the network of the provincial youth program managers.	Existing research, academic programs and academic centres with a focus on co-operative (nationally and internationally)

IV. Implementation

Implementation Plan

To ensure that the development of a National Youth Action Strategy continues to be a priority for Canadian co-operatives, an initial Youth Forum took place in 2008 and following the Forum, and using the feedback gathered, the following implementation plan has been created to implement a series of short-term objectives between March and September 2009. From these initiatives, it would be appropriate for a 3 to 5 year strategy to be developed for the activities that result from the following, short-term initiatives:

Activity	Person/ people responsible	Timeframe	Resource Requirements
Engagement with Co-operative Youth Program Managers	CCA, staff person participating in quarterly meetings with the youth program managers	Next meeting May 2009 (there will be opportunity for CCA to provide updates and be included on the agenda when needed)	Staff time
Provincial and sectoral consultation/ mapping exercise of current youth networks and initiatives	CCA, staff person	Spring 09 and continue for up to 6 months.	<p>Consultation interview document, and meeting times with: the national francophone network, credit union National Young Leaders Task Force, housing sector, CCEDNet and the provincial associations.</p> <p>Interviews can be conducted by phone or by meeting with groups with already scheduled meetings.</p> <p>No costs should be assigned except staff time.</p>
Establishment of a National Youth Caucus	Co-ordination and participation of a CCA staff person	Initial meeting to take place in May and perhaps a face to face meeting at the 2009 CCA Congress and AGM, June 16-19 then on-going	The group will be comprised of 10 to 15 people including: a CCA board director, a CCA staff resource, an academic and/ or student from one of the Canadian university co-operative centres, a representative from the National Francophone Co-operative Network, a couple of young people from various provinces and co-operators from co-ops already

			involved in youth engagement. In total the group will be made up of 10 to 15 people. Phone and web conferencing resources
Using technology	CCA staff person, other members of the National Youth Caucus	On-going	Investigating cost effective ways for allowing the group to meet and engage in regular meetings without having to incur the cost of travel for face to face meetings Investigate available technology, that allows for greater interaction than or compliments conference calls
Funding for new initiatives	CCA staff person, other members of the National Youth Caucus	On-going	Funding opportunities for co-operatives and government sources to create and implement opportunities and resources for increasing the presence of young people in co-operatives

Inputs

The following inputs will be the primary inputs required to achieve the activities recommended in the short-term implementation plan.

- Staff time—The commitment of time from a CCA staff person will be the most significant input required. This time will be utilized to co-ordinate the National Youth Caucus, conduct the mapping of the current youth initiatives and to conduct research on best practices of youth involvement and to identify funding opportunities.
- Commitment—Commitment of participation, staff and financial resources will be key commitments required by co-operatives to work with and assist CCA in developing initiatives and changing the current environment for youth in co-operatives. CCA cannot achieve the needed change on its own, instead this must be an effort that the sector comes together to address.
- Financial resources—At this time CCA has made a commitment of \$5000 to support the initiatives that are currently proposed. Once the National Youth Caucus is established and begins meeting, further resources will be required to achieve the initiatives that are proposed. The sources of the financial resources will then need to be estimated and budgeted for on a per initiative basis.

Budget

To carry out the short-term implementation plan, \$5000.00 has been budgeted by CCA. This money will mainly be used to set up telephone and web conferences, and to offset the cost of having a face-to-face meeting of the National Youth Caucus, if for example the majority of the members are already attending CCA’s National Congress in June. Once, the National Youth Caucus begins meeting and they come forward with recommendations and initiatives, funds will need to be budgeted from sources within the co-operative sector, as well as through external sources, such as government.

Gantt chart

Figure 1 presents a schedule of the timeline for this project, when various roles and operational elements will be developed. The schedule has been developed on a 15-month timeline, showing what has taken place to date and what will be done by end of September 2009.

Tasks	J-08	J-08	A-08	S-08	O-08	N-08	D-08	J-09	F-09	M-09	A-09	M-09	J-09	J-09	A-09	S-09
CCA National Youth Forum	Completed															
Follow-up, circulate notes		Completed														
Meetings on next steps, following the youth forum				Completed	Completed											
Briefing paper with recommendation to CCA Board								Completed								
Presentation to the Board									Completed							
Approved Recommendations:																
Participate in the Youth Program Manager Committee (quarterly meetings, next meeting May 2009)												To do				
Provincial and sectoral consultation (mapping)											To do	To do	To do	To do		
<i>National Youth Caucus</i>																
develop terms of reference										To do	To do	To do				
identify participants										To do	To do	To do				
set first meeting date and invite participants												To do				
informal face-to-face (not mandatory)												Tentative				
utilize technology										On-going	On-going	On-going	On-going	On-going	On-going	On-going
identify funding sources															On-going	On-going
develop a regular meeting schedule															On-going	On-going



Once again, the Gantt chart only provides a timeline for the short-term events; further plans cannot be made without input and ownership from the National Caucus and the information gathered from the mapping exercise.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

Working to bring about change at a national level is challenging, and often takes longer because of geographic distance and also because of bureaucratic processes. As CCA moves forward in developing a National Youth Strategy, this is one of the many things that will have to be monitored regularly amongst the various groups involved, namely the National Youth Caucus.

Developing the terms of reference for the National Youth Caucus will be critically important, both for setting the tone and purpose of the group and also for bringing clarity to autonomy that the Caucus will have, with respect to the types and size of initiatives that can be recommended. For example, consideration needs to be made as to whether the Caucus will be able to propose the development of large national initiatives, such as a co-op curriculum integration campaign, or whether the mandate of the Caucus will be limited to keeping co-operatives and co-operators informed about youth initiatives nationally, provincially and regionally.

Another aspect of developing a National Youth Action Strategy that will have to be monitored on an on-going and regular basis is monitoring the roles that are expected for existing co-operatives, provincial associations, sector associations and academic centres. Because all of these groups are stakeholders of the strategy and because their support and commitment is expected for a strategy to be able to come to fruition, clear roles and expectations will have to be set up for all parties involved. CCA is familiar with having to be aware of the sensitivities in having clear roles and expectations in working with various partner and member associations and the development of two recent documents—the agreement between CCA and le Conseil Canadien de la Coopération et de la mutualité (CCCM), and an Accord between CCA and the provincial associations. As both CCCM and the provincial associations will be involved and have roles in a National Youth Strategy, the agreements already developed for these groups can be used as models and modified to integrate all of the stakeholders. It cannot be stated enough, that for a National Youth Strategy to be successful it must be an initiative that includes and is supported by co-operatives and credit unions across Canada.

To monitor the accomplishment of the short-term objectives and to be aware of benchmarks, the following monitoring checkpoints have been developed for each goal and object.

Project Goals	Project Objectives	Monitoring Tasks
1. Increase the presence of young people involved in Canadian co-operatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a standing National Co-operative Youth Caucus, made up of members of co-operatives, and young people from various provinces, and co-operative sectors. • Develop and implement initiatives in the areas of education, employment and empowerment, over a 5 year plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the participation of a wide range of co-operatives, youth, provincial associations and academic centres to ensure a strong cross section of national involvement. • The first meeting of this group should take place late May/early June 2009
2. To understanding how it is that young people in Canada are identifying with the co-operative model. How have they come to learn about co-operatives and how do they identify with and utilize the model, and share this information with their peers. Do young people see the co-operative model as a means for entrepreneurship, community contributions and betterment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in quarterly meetings with the youth program managers from each of the provincial associations across Canada. • Conduct interviews/survey of co-op summer camp participants, interns and young employees of retail co-ops to understand how they came to learn out co-ops (Utilize the provincial associations to gather information). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mapping exercise to conclude by the end of July 2009. • Interview/survey material to go to the provincial youth program managers for the May meeting and they can conduct them over the course of the summer
3. Create opportunities for young people already involved in co-operatives to remain engaged and active for years to come.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a mapping exercise of co-operatives and co-operative associations across Canada to gather information on youth engagement initiatives that are currently available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mapping exercise to be concluded by the end of July 2009.
4. Identify other tools and supports that can be developed to help young people connect, to develop more co-operatives or to become involved in other co-operative initiatives. This could range from on-line forums, to toolkits, sample business plans, financial literacy, governance training, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathered from the surveys and mapping exercise will identify gaps and areas where efforts need to be concentrated, so that curriculum material or training programs, etc. can be developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion date will be end of August 2009, but because technology is always evolving, it will have to be revisited on an on-going basis.

Evaluation

At the present time this project is not in a position to be gathering extensive summative data, although it would be interesting to tally the number of young people who have participated in the various provincial summer camp programs over the years and to identify where these people are today—how many remain involved in co-operatives, what types of education did they pursue and in what other sectors are they employed? Therefore, until specific initiatives are developed, the evaluation of this project will be predominantly formative.

Similar to the monitoring requirements of this project, the evaluation will have to focus on the roles and responsibilities of both the members of the National Youth Caucus and also existing co-operatives and CCA members across Canada. The level of engagement of these groups will continually need to be evaluated and can be done through checking in regularly with the membership and also by tracking their on-going commitment to and involvement in various initiatives (financial and participation).

Over the long-term, CCA will need to know whether the initiatives are in fact attaining the ultimate goal of increasing the presence of young people in co-operatives. It would be worthwhile to gather information to inform benchmarks, such as conducting a survey of the average age of members, employees and boards of directors now and then to gather this information again in 3-4 years time. In 2004, CCA conducted its first governance survey, with the second one being held in 2008. This survey is now a great tool for allowing co-operatives to set benchmarks across the sector and in the larger business environment. A similar survey could be developed to determine the composition of Canadian co-operators.

Project Goals	Project Objectives	Performance Indicators
1. Increase the presence of young people involved in Canadian co-operatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a standing National Co-operative Youth Caucus, made up of members of co-operatives, and young people from various provinces, and co-operative sectors. • Develop and implement initiatives in the areas of education, employment and empowerment, over a 5 year plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation of co-operatives involved in the Caucus • Commitment from co-operatives, the interest in working with CCA and supporting the proposed initiatives
2. To understand how it is that young people in Canada are identifying with the co-operative model. How have they come to learn about co-operatives and how do they identify with and utilize the model, and share this information with their peers. Do young people see the co-operative model as a means for entrepreneurship and community contributions and betterment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in quarterly meetings with the youth program managers from each of the provincial associations across Canada. • Conduct interviews/survey of co-op summer camp participants, interns and young employees of retail co-ops to understand how they came to learn out co-ops (Utilize the provincial associations to gather information). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of interviews conducted • A survey on the composition of co-operators in Canada, this would provide information on young people as well as other demographics
3. Create opportunities for young people already involved in co-operatives to remain engaged and active for years to come.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a mapping exercise of co-operatives and co-operative associations across Canada to gather information on youth engagement initiatives that are currently available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A survey on the composition of co-operators in Canada
4. Identify other tools and supports that can be developed to help young people connect with one another, to develop more co-operatives or to become involved in other co-operative initiatives. This could range from on-line forums and tools, to toolkits, sample business plans, financial literacy, governance training, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathered from the surveys and mapping exercise will identify gaps and areas where efforts need to be concentrated, so that curriculum material or training programs, etc. can be developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost, ease of use, and accessibility regionally, provincially and nationally

Sustainability

The sustainability of addressing and changing the current situation of youth involvement in co-operatives lies in acquiring the support and commitment of CCA members from across Canada. The CCA Board of Directors is supporting the short-term initiatives to be completed by the end of September 2009, but any and all initiatives that emerge as a result will need to be supported by a much larger group if a National Strategy is to be sustainable. If the situation remains in its current state, there will be negative impacts experienced by all co-operatives, therefore for the Strategy to become sustainable requires commitment from co-operatives across Canada as well as a fundamental change in the way that co-operatives exist within communities. Identification, understanding and involvement in co-operatives must become less accidental and more intentional.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

With the project shifting from a community-focus to having a policy focus there is much work that remains outstanding, and this shift has also raised a lot of questions that still have not been answered. What has been interesting is that as this project has evolved and as the focus has become larger to encompass a national action strategy for young people in Canadian co-operatives, the proposed solutions continue to remain community based and community oriented. This reflects the nature of co-operatives as being primarily community based organizations. Another reflection on making the shift, is a reflection that is common when change must occur, and that is that it is important to maintain a positive point-of-view, rather than always focusing on the current challenges or amount of change that is required. This perspective can make the challenge seem too large to surmount, rather than using the opportunity to break down the task into pieces and engage change through the involvement of multiple stakeholders. The conclusions and recommendation presented intend to do just that—break down the current challenges and environment of youth engagement in Canadian co-operatives and to help people realize that there are many possible solutions.

A challenge that underlies all of the potential changes and solutions of youth engagement in co-operatives is the definition of “youth”, and the demographic, most often defined by age, that

the term youth is used to refer to. For example, the provincial youth camp programs are delivered to a youth audience, primarily between the ages of the 13 and 18. Internship programs are often for young people who are college or university graduates and 29 years of age or younger, therefore their range of engagement is most often between 18 and 29. Many co-operatives across the country refer to youth as those under 35 and credit unions in Canada define youth as anyone 40 years old and younger. Therefore, it becomes much less surprising that youth engagement is such a daunting task, when the perspective target group could fall anywhere between the ages of 13 and 40. Legally, individuals are not able to hold membership in a co-operative until they are 18 years of age, therefore the types of engagement for young people differs prior to and following 18, from a legal perspective. However, there are still many ways for young people to become involved in and knowledgeable about co-operatives prior to the legal age of 18; this is particularly true for housing co-operatives and credit unions where membership is included with or supported by parents and legal guardians. The definition is evidently problematic but also has to be recognized as a 'double-edged sword' or mutually having positive and negative implications.

The 'youth' label can have both positive and negative implications when an individual reaches a certain age. For example as individuals enter their late twenties, or are into their thirties, the connotation, association and understanding of youth, as a demographic that is gathering experience and opportunities, building wider networks and developing expertise can disregard or diminish the professional accomplishments of individuals. For example, someone in their mid-thirties, may have professional degrees, have a decade or more of professional work experience and may be more likely to be entering management positions, therefore to make a 'youth' distinction between their contributions to an organization and the contributions of their older colleagues appears to be a bit degrading. Counter to this view, is a very positive perspective, because increasingly there are a number of professional development opportunities for young people, which range from things like lower conference fees to reserved positions on boards and specialized training opportunities. With the value of professional development being at such a premium for individuals and organizations, youth involvement can be very appealing and may be one of the primary reasons for having such a broad definition.

Overall, the definition of youth is one that needs to be given some greater consideration as the life experiences, interests, and needs of people between the ages of 13 and 40 has many, many differences. If nothing else the definition warrants consideration because parents and their children could easily come under the same definition, and when looking at it from that perspective, many would agree that there are significant differences in life stages amongst this youth demographic.

The definition of youth and the challenges and opportunities that are experienced by youth are also relevant to other demographics, and rather than continually extending the demographic called 'youth' it would be easier to utilize and modify engagement strategies across groups. For example, we know that governance is vitally important to the success and operations of co-operatives, but there are many people, not limited to young people that do not have a strong understanding about governance—the rights and responsibilities of directors, how to read financial statements, the implications of various share structures, the difference between strategic planning and management, etc. Therefore, this knowledge is something that needs to be available across demographics. Resources could be better developed and better utilized to address multiple groups, such as women, Aboriginal people, and new Canadians.

In the society and culture within Canada, and many other developed countries, there is great value placed on entrepreneurship, the creativity, the innovation and the great success that some entrepreneurs are fortunate enough to benefit from. However, entrepreneurship is most often viewed as an individual characteristic. The co-operative sector has a long history of individuals and groups working together and in very innovative ways developing co-operatives to address a variety of needs. An entrepreneurial spirit can be found within many co-operators. In fact, co-operatives continue to exist because of the entrepreneurial motivations and characteristics of the pioneers of the movement. Collective entrepreneurship may be a more appropriate term for co-operatives, as co-operative development cannot be an individual effort. Collective entrepreneurship could also be very attractive to young people interested in business development but maybe unable or unwilling to enter into the development of a venture on their own. The types of co-operatives being developed today are different from the co-operative that were developed fifty, seventy or even one hundred years ago because there are different needs

that people in today's communities must address. For example, more and more worker co-operatives are emerging as large businesses move offices internationally or move out of small communities and into larger cities, there are also more social co-operatives being developed to integrate and address the needs of disadvantaged populations. An evident and obvious way to make this connection for citizens is through education, and including co-operatives in business and economic programs at the secondary and post-secondary school levels.

Related to the entrepreneurial nature of co-operative development, increased resources need to be made available to young people who are interested in co-operative development, toolkits, examples and connections to technical assistance that could help young people test and develop their co-operative ideas. Currently, the government of Ontario operates a program called *Summer Company*, this program provides \$3000 in grant money, along with mentorship to young people in high school, college or university to start their own business and 'be their own boss' for the summer. Each participant must make an application and go through an interview with the local Small Business Enterprise Centre in their area (Ministry of Small Business Enterprise, 2009). At this time, there are very few Small Business Enterprise Centres that have an understanding of co-operatives. Therefore the co-operative sector could work with the national network of Small Business Enterprise Centres to develop an awareness of co-ops and allow for young people to submit co-operative applications. Or using money from the Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) program, CCA could develop a similar program and use the provincial associations to distribute grants to young people interested in co-operative development.

In the case of increasing the involvement of young people in co-operatives there is a significant need to begin immediately. All organizations are currently preparing for large numbers of retirements as more of the Baby Boomer generation come upon this stage of life. Many organizations are concerned about succession planning and whether their planning has been sufficient, who will become the leaders of the organization and how will organizational culture be sustained. For co-operatives, succession planning can have even greater implications. Co-operatives must address the challenges of succession planning while at the same time ensuring that there is a strong understanding of the co-operative model of the business, why the organization is structured as a co-operative and the value that this brings to employees, members

and to the community. The best way for young people to learn about co-operatives is through experience and generational learning, learning from those who have built careers in co-operatives and played formative roles in the development and growth of various co-ops. A key aspect of the organizational culture that must be maintained for co-operatives is understanding the reason and purpose for co-operatives being a co-operative form of business and without young people having an understanding and appreciation of co-operatives, the model could be in jeopardy as, groups may move toward other forms of business that they are more familiar with. Generational learning has the potential to be a strong asset for co-operatives throughout Canada. These relationships may take the form of formal or informal mentorship arrangements, through job shadowing, or consciously including a range of people in organizational committees or on project work teams. Regardless of the size of a co-operative, all co-operatives need to be considerate of how much different generations can offer to one another. In whatever form a youth strategy takes, integrated into the strategy must be a strategy for the inclusion and integration for adults with young people. Adults can be the barriers and/or teachers for young people. Many adults help to open doors and provide younger people with support, confidence and some autonomy as they move forward. Research indicates that, “success in youth-based community development initiatives is enhanced when adults and youth are involved in both the management and the operational level in a partnership arrangement” (Health Canada, 1998, 5).

Throughout the course of these two projects, the youth worker co-operative and the national strategy, the focus has always been upon youth integration into co-operatives. In looking at ways that youth integration can be addressed, many people and co-operative organizations focus too narrowly upon the employment of young people. Employment is only a component of increasing the involvement of young people, it is not the only area that should be addressed or considered when developing strategies. For example, in housing co-operatives young people, especially those under the age of 18 cannot be independent members of the co-operative, their membership is through the membership of their family, there are also very few positions of employment available within an individual housing co-operative, but young people can still be engaged through involvement on committees or the formation of a youth group, amongst young members of the co-operatives, or a collection of youth within a nearby area. For credit unions and retail

co-operatives, employment could be an option but there is also a role to play in helping members to understand other types of co-operatives, so that it becomes more likely for people to have an account at a credit union, have their insurance with a co-operative and to seek out co-operative products when shopping. Through sources like the UN Youth Report and CCA’s 2008 Youth Forum it became quite clear that there are three main areas to address under the broader classification of youth involvement, and they are: education, employment and empowerment. Looking at these three areas together, provides great flexibility and opportunity for potential solutions and recognizes that these three areas are related to one another and in many ways they mutually benefit one another: The greater understanding a person has about co-operatives, the more likely they are to utilize a co-operative, recognize a co-operative or choose a co-operative in addressing an unmet need. Greater knowledge would also increase the talent pool available to co-operatives, as more informed applicants would seek out co-operatives as potential employers. Once people become involved in co-operatives and have an understanding of their structure and function, it is very common to see people getting involved in governance or directorship roles. Therefore it may be easier to think of youth involvement in co-operatives in a circular model, see diagram 1, where there is not a specific point of entry but rather multiple, related points of entry.

Through further research this circular theory can be elaborated upon and developed to address another observation that has been identified-- currently, it appears that involvement in co-operatives is far too accidental and often not intentional. It must be acknowledged that co-operatives have long and significant histories within many communities

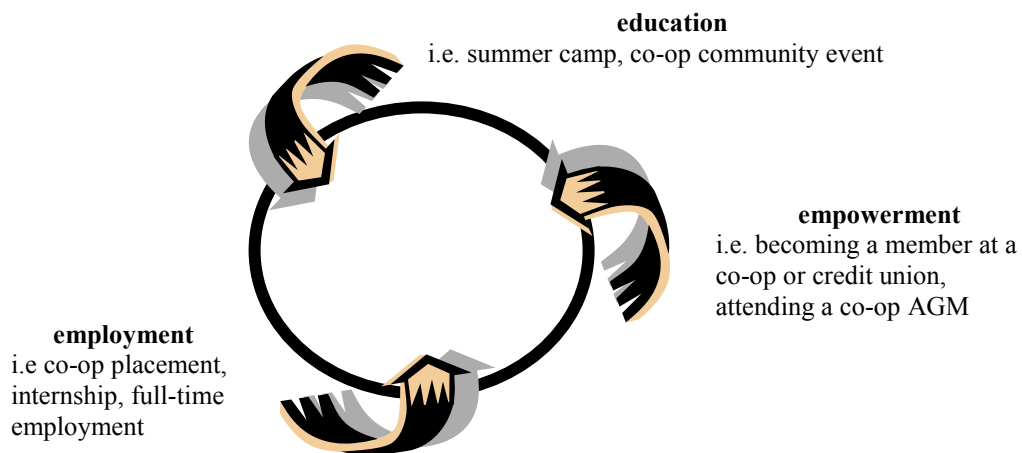


Diagram 1: A circular model illustrating multiple points of entry into co-operatives

across Canada, they were foundational in the development of communities and essential for the survival and existence of many more. Although there are regions across the country where co-operative ideals and co-operative brands are widely recognized there are very few co-operatives that can boast to having a staff that is completely knowledgeable and well versed in co-operatives. In talking to co-operators, many have an experience or an event in their personal life story where they can remember becoming involved or reaching a point where they realized they were working for or involved in a co-operative. Feedback, and personal accounts have shown that once people experience co-operatives and become involved, the economic and social conscience of co-operative values often match with a person's individual values, and their involvement increases, and many express an interest in wanting to build a career or become more involved in co-operatives. These accounts of 'accidentally falling' into the co-operative community can be beautiful, but upon reflection it becomes very obvious that this is not a sustainable method for people to become involved in co-operatives. The primary reason for the lack of sustainability of all of these accidental entries is that they are too unpredictable, and there is no consistency in when or how many people 'fall in'. Some are lucky and their exposure comes in their teens or twenties, for others the exposure could be in their forties or even fifties. Therefore, the unpredictability of entrance and exposure to co-operatives makes sustainability and succession planning for co-operative organizations extremely difficult.

The implication of 'falling into' an awareness of co-ops has evident impacts upon the succession of employment and leadership but additionally, has implications on the education and research that is being done on co-operatives. Across Canada there are centres and programs offering graduate level studies to students interested in co-operatives: The British Columbia Institute for Studies in Co-operatives, at the University of Victoria and the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan, do not offer degrees in co-operatives, but through various disciplines students are able to concentrate their research in co-operative topics. The faculties of these centres often teach courses outside of the co-op centre to a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students, incorporating co-op topics. Through Canada's Social Economy Network, and these university hubs across the country, there are additional opportunities for graduate students to concentrate their studies in co-operatives. Additionally, St. Mary's

University offers Canada's only Masters of Management in Co-ops and Credit Unions. This program is designed for people already involved in co-operatives. The programs that exist are of great quality and recognized world-wide, however, in many cases students must once again 'fall into' an awareness about co-operatives or know about them in entering their graduate studies. Therefore there is a strong base for educational opportunities but gap areas include integrating co-operative curriculum at the undergraduate level, and at more universities throughout Canada, so that more students become aware of co-operatives before the graduate level.

This is one of the reasons why co-operative education is so important, because there is a need for more people, and especially young people to intentionally want to work for co-operatives, to study co-operatives, to become involved in co-operatives, and to understand the significance of creating strong local economies where citizens are engaged and social and economic challenges are addressed through co-operative approaches.

While there is much work ahead for co-operatives to increase their visibility and understanding amongst the general public, there is a strong foundation already in place and a number of successful initiatives that can be built upon. The foundation of the co-operative model and its democratic nature allows people at many levels to become involved, develop and demonstrate their leadership skills. In each province, and in the Atlantic region of Canada, there are youth co-operative leadership camp programs.

Participants at the camps are in their teens and must be sponsored by co-operatives or credit unions in their area. The curriculum is designed to teach young people about co-operatives while also being immersed into a co-operative environment and learning how the values and principles of co-operatives can be applied to all aspects of their life. Each of these programs provides much needed education to young people. They are a true asset to the co-operative movement. However, the greatest challenge experienced by the camp programs is that they currently do not have the capacity to continue to engage and remain in contact with large numbers of the participants. Some will return to the programs in staff/ volunteer position, but many of the participants complete the program and move onto college or university. At this time there is a gap in the programs and services that are available to young people to keep them engaged. Many

of the internships are for small numbers of participants by comparison to the camps and require the completion of a post-secondary degree. Therefore one of the areas for the National Youth Caucus to focus on will be developing ways to maintain contact with young people, particularly between the ages of 18 and 25.

Another asset for the co-operative sector is the concept of the leadership pipeline and the diversity of the co-operative sector. As stated in *Made in Canada Leadership*, in a co-operative “everyone is expected to demonstrate some leadership, regardless of position. In other words, show up, pull up your sleeves, and lead. This expectation is grounded in necessity as well as in co-operative philosophy” (Henein & Morissette, 2007, 177).

Therefore if everyone involved in a co-operative is expected to deliver at least a degree of leadership and with co-operatives in nearly every sector and at every organizational level (grassroots to national) the potential pool of people to draw from is nearly infinite. The same thread is woven through all of the possible solutions and recommendations—education is key. Formal and informal, education is going to be the way that co-operatives ensure that they are part of the make-up of communities for generations to come.

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