



Social Enterprises  
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# Worker Co-operative Development in Saskatchewan The Promise, the Problems, and the Prospects

Mitch Diamantopoulos and April Bourgeois

**A research report prepared for the Northern Ontario, Manitoba,  
and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite**

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WORKER CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT  
IN SASKATCHEWAN

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MITCH DIAMANTOPOULOS AND APRIL BOURGEOIS



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

Centre for the Study  
of Co-operatives

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Centre for the Study of Co-operatives  
101 Diefenbaker Place  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon SK Canada S7N 5B8  
Phone: (306) 966-8509  
Fax: (306) 966-8517  
E-mail: [coop.studies@usask.ca](mailto:coop.studies@usask.ca)  
Website: [www.usaskstudies.coop](http://www.usaskstudies.coop)

Community-University Institute for Social Research  
R.J.D. Williams Building  
University of Saskatchewan  
432 – 221 Cumberland Avenue  
Saskatoon SK Canada S7N 1M3  
Phone: (306) 966-2136 / Fax: (306) 966-2122  
E-mail: [cuisr.liaison@usask.ca](mailto:cuisr.liaison@usask.ca)  
Website: [www.usask.ca/cuisr](http://www.usask.ca/cuisr)

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## ABSTRACT

**T**HIS STUDY examines the potential for a stronger and more significant worker co-operative sector in Saskatchewan and probes some of the development barriers that prevent it. These barriers to democratic, worker-led enterprise include systemic problems — structurally rooted in the political economy of investor-led development — and contextual problems specific to the province’s evolving economic, social, cultural, and political development.

To address the systemic problems, the analysis builds on a review of the comparative literature, much of it generated in the context of the eighties worker co-operative boom. These findings on enabling practices and policies from other regions focus on problems of finance, management, work-culture, expansion-barriers, and collective entrepreneurship. In these areas, the potential for adopting effective innovations from elsewhere is considerable.

To address the contextual factors more specific to Saskatchewan, the study focuses on issues of legal definition and reporting, demographics, labour market structure, movement culture, and provincial partnerships. In these areas, more endogenous solutions are required. These include the need to (re-)involve provincial sector, state, and extended social movement families in building new development coalitions to drive new co-operative campaigns.

This bi-focal approach provides the basis for the analysis and recommendations that follow. However, while the study is structured around the promise and problems faced by worker co-operatives, this model is part of a wider family of worker-inclusive co-operative enterprises. Indeed, the worker co-operative has acted as a “wedge sector,” driving wider forms of multi-stakeholding such as worker-shareholder or solidarity co-operatives. This report finds that investments in worker co-operative development also drive the development



of a wider new sector of adaptive models that also include workers in governance, although not exclusively. Building a strong worker co-operative sector can help open the door to other new models, thus further building overall movement diversity and its potential to regenerate and expand.

Indeed, worker co-operative development needs to be understood as part of the New Social Economy response to the new needs and structural dislocations associated with globalization. A clearer understanding of this model's potential and problems thus also provides important insights into wider problems and potentials for emerging forms of entrepreneurial diversity. This includes common transition problems facing other emerging co-operative sectors, social enterprises, and forms of employee ownership.

## INTRODUCTION: THE PROMISE, THE PROBLEMS, AND THE PROSPECTS

**T**HIS REPORT presents findings from the scientific literature on worker co-operative development, outlining some key opportunities and challenges for supporting this emerging sector in Saskatchewan. The analysis is organized into two sections. First, it addresses several structural development barriers that democratic, worker-owned firms typically encounter in capitalist economies. These structural barriers are not unique to Saskatchewan and have therefore been the subject of considerable international study — and successful social innovations — to overcome them. Second, the study explores some of the more specific barriers — demographic, cultural, and political — that define the Saskatchewan development context. The report concludes with several recommendations to build the provincial sector.

### THE PROMISE

The worker co-operative model empowers workers to own and democratically self-manage their own business, in accordance with co-operative principles (ICA 2011). This innovation has become increasingly prominent in recent decades. One index of significant sector growth and consolidation is the formation of second-tier federations. Around the world, 57 sector federations now operate in 39 countries (CICOPA 2011).

The benefits of worker co-operation have been well documented elsewhere (Axworthy 1985; Oakeshott 1978; Benello 1982; Quarter 1989; Livingstone 2004; Cornforth Thomas, Lewis, and Spear 1988; Webb 1987; National Task Force on Co-operative Development

1984). Some of these benefits include the model's ability to:

- pool resources, achieving through collective entrepreneurship what would be impossible as individuals
- empower non-traditional entrepreneurial actors, thus expanding the base of local economic activity
- build employee involvement, satisfaction, and firm productivity
- meet the employment and psycho-social needs of those marginalized by economic recession, regional disparity, and structural disadvantage
- meet workers' desire for a more democratic, empowering quality of work life and on-the-job self-actualization
- democratize economic and social participation by building workers' experience, skills, relationships, and confidence

The significant scope and scale of the sector's achievements in Italy (Ammirato 1996; Earle 1986) and Spain (Oakeshott 1978; Whyte and Whyte 1991; Morrison 1991; Cheney 1999) clearly demonstrate the model's potential. The Mondragon complex in Spain's Basque region employs over 90,000 worker-owners (Adeler 2009) and Italy has the world's largest concentration of worker co-operatives (Birchall 1997). Significant strides have also been documented in France and the UK (Axworthy 1985; Oakeshott 1978; Côté and Vézina 2001; Cornforth, et al. 1988). More modest gains have also been made in North America (Krimerman and Lindenfeld 1992; Axworthy and Perry 1988; Quarter 1989; 1992; Quarter and Wilkinson 1990; 1995), particularly in Québec (Bridault and Lafrenière 1989; Lévesque 1990; Lévesque and Ninacs 2000; Diamantopoulos 2011).

The Canadian sector has re-emerged slowly but steadily over the last four decades. Incorporation statistics show Canadian worker co-operatives benefited from the world-wide recession and shift in workplace values during the eighties. As Table 1 shows, the number of worker co-operatives and owner-members more than doubled from 1985 to 1995. Sector revenues nearly tripled (Co-operatives Secretariat 1986; 1996). The sector's national organization, the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (CWCF), was founded in 1991. It launched several capacity-building innovations for the sector, including a group RRSP plan, a nation-wide developers' network, and pilot funding for a worker co-operative venture capital fund (Corcoran 2007). This sector federation continues to drive development support in English-speaking Canada (Hough, Wilson and Corcoran 2010). Membership, revenues, and asset growth all tapered off from 1995 to 2005, as the sector entered a period of consolidation,

forestry encountered serious difficulties, and workers in Québec increasingly opted for newer worker-shareholder and solidarity co-operative structures for larger enterprises (Côté 2007). Nevertheless, the number of worker co-operatives continued to increase from 225 in 1995 to 341 by 2005 (Co-operatives Secretariat 1996; 2006).

Table 1: Canadian worker co-operative sector growth: Co-operatives, membership, revenue, and assets, 1985–2005

<b>Development indices</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>
Co-operatives	98	177	225	298	341
Members	6,577	8,695	14,368	13,314	13,310
Revenues (\$thousands)	98,259	298,941	459,900	614,300	527,700
Assets (\$thousands)	—	—	219,800	405,100	312,500

Source: Co-operatives Secretariat (1985–1994; 1995–2006)

Although a small sector of the co-operative movement in English-speaking Canada — and a tiny actor in the Canadian economy overall — worker co-operatives have outperformed the rest of the country’s co-operative sector on key indices over the last three decades. As Table 2 illustrates, sector growth since 1985 exceeds non-financial co-operatives overall, both in new businesses developed and revenues. It also leads in asset appreciation since 1992, when the Co-operatives Secretariat began tracking this index.

Table 2: Comparative growth rates for all non-financial co-operative sectors vs. the worker co-operative sector in Canada, 1985 - 2005

<b>Development indices</b>	<b>Non-financial co-operative sector</b>	<b>Worker co-op sector</b>
Membership	+ 98%	+ 102%
Number of co-ops	+ 63%	+ 248%
Revenues	+ 91%	+ 437%
Assets (from 1995–2005)	+ 22%	+ 42%

Source: Co-operatives Secretariat (1985–1994; 1995–2006)

In recent decades, the worker-owned model has proven itself in other jurisdictions, built sector organization around the world, and achieved leadership in new co-operative development in Canada. However, its gains are regionally uneven. In the domestic context, Saskatchewan lags far behind the national trend with only a handful of worker co-operatives. These include a Regina travel agency, a family farm advocacy group, a technical assistance group for co-operatives, the cafeteria at Regina City Hall, and alternative city newspapers, *prairie dog* in Regina and *Planet S* in Saskatoon. Unemployed and under-employed people in Saskatchewan could benefit from more widespread adoption of this innovation, from a more enabling policy environment (Adeler 2009), and from more popular sector support for the option (Diamantopoulos 2011).

By contrast, focused development assistance to the sector in Québec has driven significant gains over the last three decades (Côté 2007; Clement 2009; Girard 1999; Diamantopoulos 2011). An historic footnote to the movement, the worker-owned sector accounted for a full ten percent of all co-operatives in Québec by the turn of the millennium (Vézina 2001). By 2006, 7,009 people were employed by the province's 184 worker co-operatives. Another 13,674 were employed in worker shareholder co-operatives and solidarity (or multi-stakeholder) co-operatives, where workers also participate in governance. Combined, these worker-inclusive co-operatives now account for a full third of all jobs in Québec's non-financial co-operative sector (Clement 2009). By achieving comparable per capita growth in the worker-led co-operative sector, 7,000 jobs could be created in Saskatchewan. At over double the workers employed by consumer wholesaling and refinery giant, Federated Co-operatives Limited (Saskatchewan) (Co-operatives Secretariat 2009), that's strong incentive to take more seriously the province's untapped potential for workers to drive development.

## THE PROBLEMS

Despite the sector's rapid growth since the eighties, the worker co-operative may be the most demanding co-operative model to establish and sustain (Quarter 1992). The Saskatchewan context also poses distinct barriers to acceptance and support (Axworthy 1986; Wetzel and Gallagher 1987; Laycock 1987; Diamantopoulos 2011). Realistic and achievable development strategies must therefore address both sets of constraints.

## Systemic Problems and the Five Barriers Theory

Emerging worker co-operative sectors often face five fundamental challenges:

- The Capitalization Problem: Access to Finance
- The Managerial Problem: Appropriate and Effective Democratic Leadership
- The Work Culture Problem: How to Work As Worker-Owners
- The Limits to Growth Problem: Internal Barriers to Expansion
- The Entrepreneurial Problem: Low Formation Rates (Cornforth et al. 1988)

This section outlines these problems, relates them to the Saskatchewan context, and discusses some strategies used elsewhere to solve them.

### *The Capitalization Problem: Access to Finance*

Unlike investor-owned firms, which routinely sell shares to finance new ventures or expansion, worker co-operatives are owned in common. By definition, voting shares cannot be owned by non-workers. This provides strong appeal for democratic self-management, where workers are their own bosses and outside investors cannot dictate terms. However, it restricts their financial options; it means co-operatives are heavily dependent on loan finance and excluded from forms of venture capital that increasingly drive their competitors. Lack of access to outside investment undermines start-ups, operations, and the expansion of otherwise viable worker co-operatives.

Additionally, the modest means of many workers, and their lack of experience and expertise in management, often undermines their eligibility for bank loans. Loans officers may be quick to dismiss the notion of collective entrepreneurship, or proposals from non-traditional entrepreneurial classes, as “high risk.” This double bias against worker co-operative lending reflects prevailing prejudices and a lack of information, both in banks and credit unions.

For these reasons, innovations in social finance are particularly important for worker co-operatives. In Mondragon, the capitalization problem has been solved by creating a movement bank (Oakeshott 1978; Whyte and Whyte 1991; Morrison 1991). It pools and lends out member-co-operative reserves, including worker-member equity held in “internal accounts” for retirement. It allocates a portion of these retained earnings to new development. Similarly, the recent expansion of the co-operative sector in Québec has been fuelled by a string of innovations in solidarity finance (see Appendix A). From a union-based credit union that

specializes in serving worker co-operatives (*Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins* 2010) to a co-operative and regional development fund managed by Desjardins and driven by generous tax credits (Mathews 2001), a staircase of financial instruments now caters to the full range of capital needs in Québec's social economy (Notwell, Reynolds, and Katz 2010). The Co-operative Investment Plan (CIP) tax credit of 150 percent shelters workers from the double risk of losing their investments and their jobs. It raised \$100 million in worker co-operative investment over 13 years (Girard 1999), jump-starting new projects among formerly risk-averse, working-class populations. This revolution in social finance has solved the capitalization problem in Québec.

Due to the structure of Canadian federalism, workers outside Québec have access to a threadbare patchwork quilt of lending options based on the province or territory where they live. However, one promising nation-wide development is the Tenacity Works Fund, a venture capital fund developed and managed by the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (CWCF) (Corcoran 2007). A pilot project with a limited capitalization of \$1.5 million, this provides a sound model for a larger and more sustainable fund. The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) has also recently called for a co-operative development fund; it would not exclusively support worker co-operatives but the broad-based CCA has stronger political leverage to win the concession. Nova Scotia and Manitoba have also recently introduced tax credits to encourage co-operative development. In Nova Scotia, investors in co-operatives can claim generous tax credits (Neamtan and Murdoch 2005). In Manitoba, co-operatives can reduce their tax exposure by contributing to a provincial co-operative development fund (Manitoba 2011).

In any case, the lack of specialist financial instruments of any kind is a major obstacle to worker co-operative development in Saskatchewan (Diamantopoulos 2011). As innovations in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and Québec show, feasible mechanisms have been developed to fill this finance gap, and there are important roles for the co-operative and credit union movement, the state, and the trade union movement to play in establishing similar financial tools in Saskatchewan.

#### *The Managerial Problem: Appropriate and Effective Democratic Leadership*

By definition, worker co-operatives pool the expertise of workers. Just as they lack financial means, workers are also disadvantaged by their lack of managerial experience. In fact, many employees have learned to distrust management as such, instinctively resisting its legitimacy.

Idealistic co-operants may propose formally democratic, but potentially unworkable or inefficient, notions like job-rotation and balanced job complexes (Albert and Hahnel 1991). Although useful guidelines to democratic work practices, rigid adherence to these doctrines may ultimately jeopardize the business health of the firm and exhaust or alienate other members. Similarly, with the day-to-day operational pressures of sustaining their firm, workers may lack time to build management skills or structures. Their co-operatives may descend into a “tyranny of structurelessness,” and member confidence in the venture may wane.

To compensate for their lack of managerial expertise, the co-operative may hire an outside manager. However, recruitment and retention can pose challenges. Wage differentials — both within the co-operative and relative to market rates — may give rise to divisive tensions and turn-over. There is also the risk that a manager who is not really committed to the co-operative may learn enough about the business to set up shop to compete with it. Worker co-operatives therefore have strong reasons to build management training capacity. Members need to understand the important role of management. This includes understanding how to participate constructively in their own board roles, including work with managers and professional consultants. Similarly, managers need to embrace democratic governance and build the skills to effectively work with a democratic board. This skill set may more closely resemble a non-profit organization’s executive director than a corporate executive officer.

Unfortunately, in a marginal area of the economy, both expertise and training in democratic management is hard to come by. Like the paucity of textbook treatments of co-operatives (Quarter, Schugurensky, McCollum and Mook 2007), there is a lack of effective training for co-operators. There are graduate-level co-operative management training programs at the Université de Sherbrooke and St Mary’s University in Halifax. However, for each one of these seats there are thousands of seats in conventional business schools, where the curricula are overwhelmingly based on the investor-owned firm model. Similarly, there is a Centre for the Study of Co-operatives in Saskatoon and the Centre for Co-operative and Community-Based Economy in Victoria, but these are both academic research centres, not management or director training facilities, although they contribute to such training. Finally, although the CCA offers director training, these courses are very expensive, are offered only occasionally, and deal in general board principles rather than with the specific needs of worker co-operatives. The lack of training opportunities in co-operative management in the West leaves worker co-operators without the tools to deal with the special problems, and potentials, posed by democratic workplaces.



The Mondragon system emerged out of a technical college (Baldacchino 1990) and now boasts its own university, a compelling example of how important adult education and skill building are to the success of worker co-operatives. Cornforth et al. (1988) also emphasize the role of co-operative support organizations in lending consulting and training assistance to emerging co-operatives. Technical assistance empowers workers to effectively participate in democratic structures and self-manage their enterprise (Cornforth and Thomas 1990; Adams and Hansen 1992; Quarter 1989; Krimerman and Lindenfeld 1992; Benello 1982). In Québec, the *co-opératives de développement régional* (CDR) network provides particularly robust and regionalized service to emerging co-operatives, supporting them with training, feasibility studies, and often mediating with specialist consultants and lenders (Côté 2007).

In English-speaking Canada, the CWCF has organized a network of development consultants (Corcoran 2007), but the Prairies are sparsely populated, the market for development work is small, and these developers are both isolated and under-resourced. Their clients frequently can't afford their services, made all the more expensive by the distance they must often travel. While the Saskatchewan government experimented with a Co-operative Development Assistance Program in the nineties, providing up to \$10,000 to contract technical assistance, it supported only ten co-operatives a year, would not consider second applications from rapidly growing co-operatives, and was short-lived (Diamantopoulos 2011).

Filling the training and technical assistance gap in Saskatchewan needs to be a priority. Also, like innovations in social finance, examples of effective development networks — particularly in Québec — provide useful models (Savard 2007; Côté 2007).

#### *The Work Culture Problem: How to Work As Worker-Owners*

The transition from wage labour to worker-ownership implies a major change in workplace roles and the development of new skills. This psycho-social transition can be liberating but also deeply unsettling (Benello 1982). Compounding the situation are the many other stress points involved in building a new business or rescuing a failing one. Moving from the authoritarian — but familiar — norms of the investor-owned workplace to the democratic — but unfamiliar — norms of the employee-owned workplace can provoke crises of group confidence and cohesion. Some members may panic over an apparently overwhelming set of new problems for which they feel ill-equipped to cope. Others may be too eager to step into the apparent leadership vacuum, assuming the role of authoritarian leader. Without sufficient time devoted to effectively facilitate democratic discussion, deliberation, and group development, these tensions can become explosive.

Democratic self-management is fundamentally based on making group decisions, including decisions to delegate authority on many day-to-day operations. It, therefore, requires clear formalization of roles and responsibilities. While democratic involvement in the development of policy may be new, and trying, to some, it is also crucial to define clear structures and processes for review of new members (including criteria for acceptance and probationary periods), performance review, grievance adjudication, disciplinary action, and surplus allocation. This group work creates the “social contract” that binds members together with shared understandings, expectations, commitments, and new business values. Through their own reflections, discussions, and decisions, members lay the shared foundations for the democratic firm.

However, establishing the co-operative’s articles of incorporation, its structures, and the understandings through which the workers will function as a democratic body demands an exceptional level of “soft skills”: in communication, interpersonal relations, constructive criticism, negotiation, and conflict resolution. For, in essence, this is a project of building the firm’s “social capital,” cultivating relationships of trust, norms of reciprocity, and open channels for communication (Coleman 1988). This is the glue that will bind individual members together into a cohesive group capable of concerted action. Group facilitation and training can help members become responsible and effective participants, balancing the need for effective democratic governance and efficient business management. Without this “pre-development” work, conflicts may be more frequent, more intense, and more potentially debilitating. By contrast, collaborative decision-making is an important investment in forging a convivial and democratic workplace culture.

Many corporate managers understand that business goals can be better achieved through collaboration than command and control hierarchies. Similarly, realizing the worker co-operative’s competitive advantage requires that due care and attention be paid to the design and function of democratic infrastructure; purposeful design and support can ensure, and sustain, shop-floor morale and group cohesion. Although less tangible, this work requires specialist technical assistance as surely as the development of a feasibility study or business plan.

While there are worker co-operative developers in the West who can assist emerging and evolving co-operatives through these developmental transitions (Diamantopoulos in press), the lack of financing to emerging co-operatives makes it difficult to build sustainable local training and facilitation capacity. However, effective models for co-operative support organi-

zations and supportive policy exist in jurisdictions like Québec and Manitoba. A funding mechanism to support member development — and the development of regional training capacity — needs to be the third priority for building vibrant democratic workplaces in Saskatchewan.

*The Limits to Growth Problem: Internal Barriers to Expansion*

“Grow or die” is a frequent refrain in corporate boardrooms. The reason is that the increased scope and scale of market leaders’ operations generally generates new economies and advantages over smaller competitors; as cumulative gains accrue to the market leader, challengers are gradually squeezed to the margins, or out of business altogether. This threat of being marginalized by better capitalized, more growth-oriented capitalist firms looms particularly large for worker co-operatives.

There are several reasons for the slow growth of this model. First, as we have seen, financing limits on worker co-operatives put them at a disadvantage; their competitors can attract investment more quickly and move more aggressively on emerging opportunities such as taking over a competitor. Second, co-operatives’ democratic culture may encourage members to discount the ideology of “growth for growth’s sake”; they may be wary that quality of work-life will decline if the co-operative “gets too large.” Third, in an investor-owned firm, there is a strong incentive to grow the company so investors can maximize return when they cash-out or sell the company. This incentive to grow the share value does not exist for worker co-operatives because its shares are not linked to the firm’s market value and cannot be traded (Cornforth et al. 1988).

Some novel solutions to this dilemma have been developed. These include the approach of Mondragon, where a central bank has been used to build up an integrated system of co-operatives; integrating horizontally and vertically by seeding new co-operatives within one unified system. Similarly, the Italian movement’s development of consortia allows member co-operatives to participate in joint-purchasing and joint-bidding, thereby realizing economies of scope and scale by other means. In Québec, the solidarity finance movement addresses the distinct financing needs of emerging and expanding co-operatives, across their life-cycle. The CDR network is now also being discussed as a vehicle for promoting regional co-operative consortia on the Italian model. Individual co-operatives may be unable to capture the economies and synergies available to highly leveraged, rapid growth corporations. However, they can realize these advantages as a movement — through federated structures, re-pooling mutualist capital, and creating new forms of intra-movement co-operation.

Legal modernization and education can also assist worker co-operatives to find more effective capitalization mechanisms. Most worker co-operatives have been forced to incorporate outside worker co-operative legislation due to its overly restrictive and patronizing character (e.g., requiring a minimum of three members to incorporate and that the term “employment co-operative” be included in the firm’s trading name). Other legal vehicles are not well known or utilized. For example, in Saskatchewan, labour-sponsored venture capital corporations (LSVCC) enable a firm’s employees to make RRSP-eligible investments in their employer’s company while earning labour tax credits. While not specifically designed for worker co-operatives, the LSVCC structure creates an incentive and a mechanism for workers to invest in their own co-operative. Similarly, flexible models of multi-stake holding like worker-shareholder or multi-stakeholder co-operatives can enable workers to enter into democratically structured partnerships: with investors, when they need additional capital to expand; or with other groups, who can contribute financing or other resources to launch and sustain a venture that workers may lack the resources to carry alone (Côté 2007).

In Saskatchewan, solving the limits to growth problem will first require creative solutions to the financing and technical assistance gaps, as already discussed. Enabling legislation for best practice worker co-operatives and forms of worker-involved joint-ventures (such as worker-shareholder and multi-stakeholder or “solidarity” co-operatives) can also define flexible means for pooling investment while protecting against degeneration. Provincial legislation elsewhere suggests how the Saskatchewan act might be refined (Axworthy and Perry 1988; Adeler 2009). Building co-operative to co-operative, sector to sector contact points, strengthening regional and sectoral apex organizations, and investing in projects that build financing pools and unify movement energies can also help to rebuild a culture of inter-co-operation, the basis for more formal consortia strategies over the longer term. Italy, Manitoba, and Québec each provide relevant examples of possible new forms of co-operation among co-operatives.

#### *The Entrepreneurial Problem: Low Formation Rates*

Despite the co-operative movement’s deep historic roots in working class action (Fairbairn 1994), many workers movements have gradually ceded entrepreneurship to the investing classes. In Saskatchewan, where co-operative enterprise has been traditionally farmer-led, workers’ aversion to entrepreneurial action is even more pronounced (Diamantopoulos 2011). Focused instead on collective bargaining and political action, the movement’s involve-

ments with co-operation have been intermittent and often conflictual (Wetzel and Gallagher 1987; Axworthy 1986). Not surprisingly, Saskatchewan trade unions have not developed much interest in worker self-management. Building up that interest — and consolidating it into a sustainable movement culture — is key to mobilizing workers for co-operative development (Develtere 1996; Baldacchino 1990).

Elsewhere, low formation rates have been addressed in several ways. One leading strategy is the organisation of institutional intermediaries to deliver frontline technical and financial assistance (Cornforth et al. 1988; Savard 2007; Côté 2007; Corcoran 2007). Typically, these co-operative support organizations (CSOs) promote the worker ownership option, support worker-owners in their start-up efforts, help assemble development coalitions, and build specialized support structures (like sector federations or financing pools). In addition to supporting start-ups, CSOs often also target employees in at-risk businesses, businesses with retiring proprietors, and public services that might otherwise be privatized. In various regions, co-operative and labour movements have each invested in robust institutional interventions. The following discussion outlines some of the most successful efforts.

**The role of co-operative support organizations** — Cornforth et al. (1988) argue that the Co-operative Development Agency (CDA) network in the UK was the most important driver behind the UK worker co-operative boom in the eighties, swelling that sector from about 35 co-operatives in the early seventies to over 1000 by 1985. These multi-purpose institutional intermediaries educated workers and development partners on the model, lobbied governments for program and policy support, and helped build new institutional supports. The CDA network was “probably the most important development in the continuing development of the UK worker co-operative sector” (19). In short, these agencies helped solve the collective action problem for sector development by building necessary support structures and strategies.

Similar arguments have been made for France’s *boutiques de gestion* (Tremblay 1985), Québec’s *co-opératives de développement régional* (Savard 2007; Côté 2007), co-operative development consultancies in the US (Benello 1982; Krimerman and Lindenfeld 1992), and English-speaking Canada’s developers’ network — organised under the umbrella of the CWCF (Corcoran 2007). Like the many regional business service centres that help support investor-led entrepreneurial action, realistic worker co-operative sector building strategies simply require dedicated regional capacity.

**The role of educational and cultural campaigns** — Why don't more people in Saskatchewan start worker co-operatives? Many simply lack information. Some aren't even aware the option exists. Others are understandably averse to risking time, trust, and money on an unfamiliar concept. Most will choose to err in favour of the "tried and trusted" investor-owned firm model, often on the advice of accountants, lawyers, and business development advisors trained in mainstream institutions and lacking specialist knowledge of co-operative enterprise and employee ownership. These professionals are reluctant to advise outside the scope of their experience. For clients who require specialist expertise, they may also not know to whom to refer them.

This institutionally entrenched way of starting businesses is what economists refer to as "path dependency" and it represents a powerful barrier to entrepreneurial innovation. Overcoming it requires concerted and sustained engagement — with would-be entrepreneurs and professional gatekeepers alike. In turn, this educational campaign requires training tools, promotional materials, and interventions customized to the needs of each segment in this chain of influence (i.e., workers, trade union personnel and leaders, accountants, lawyers, business development consultants, and loans officers). Shifting the business culture — and advising the advisers — thus requires capable and focused leadership from developers with frontline experience and know-how. These developers constitute a movement-within-a-movement (Diamantopoulos, in press) and are often based in CSOs — which deliver specialized advice, training, mentoring, and technical assistance.

Only re-emerging on the world stage as a business model — after a long hiatus — in the eighties (Birchall 1997; Cornforth et al. 1988), the worker co-operative option is not yet readily available in Saskatchewan. The model has emerged in fits and starts and on a geographically uneven basis. Just as the investor-owned firm is an historical product, which took centuries to evolve to its present form — with myriad policy and institutional supports and a vast cultural-infomational apparatus committed to its diffusion (Vanek 1971) — the worker co-operative is a social innovation that may also take decades — not years — to evolve into a modestly-sized sector in Saskatchewan . The successful spread of the labour-managed firm model also requires a broader project of institution, policy, program, and movement-building. It requires social movements to propel the concept and organization to structure support for it. Most fundamentally, it requires a cultural shift: in our thinking about what constitutes legitimate and viable business; in our thinking about who can and should take entrepreneurial initiative; in workers' willingness to take those risks; and in development partners' willingness to devote time and resources to promoting and supporting their efforts.

One might expect that a province with such a broad-based co-operative sector (Hammond Ketilson, Gertler, Fulton, Dobson, and Polsom 1998) and deeply rooted movement traditions (Fairbairn 2005) would provide fertile soil for this innovation. However, worker ownership fundamentally challenges the dominant business norms and values of an investor-led economy, on the one hand, and the traditional norms and values of an agrarian-based movement culture, on the other. Additionally, by reversing workers' subordination to managers, the model tends to antagonize corporate and co-operative managers alike.

Overcoming these deeply rooted cultures of economic action requires a counter-intuitive — even revolutionary — shift in thinking about business. This implies an aggressive and sustained campaign of advocacy and organization — just as earlier waves of agrarian agitation and adult education drove pooling, consumer co-operation, and credit unionism in the twentieth century (Fairbairn 2005; G. Fairbairn 1984). Like those campaigns, today's emerging sectors must also construct an “emergent culture” (Williams 2005) to effectively vie for economic authority against more traditional and dominant cultural understandings of what counts as valid enterprise; viable economic action; and legitimate entrepreneurs.

Advocates for worker co-operation should anticipate resistance to their ideas, just as Saskatchewan's consumer co-operators once struggled — both against capitalist cultural assumptions and the prejudices of their agricultural producer co-operator cousins (Fairbairn 2005). Indeed, against this historical backdrop of well-entrenched “first mover advantage” for farmer and consumer co-operatives in rural Saskatchewan and the increasing historic dominance of the investor-owned firm model across the province (Diamantopoulos 2011), it is encouraging that even a few Saskatchewan proponents have nonetheless adopted worker ownership (National Film Board 1982; Quarter 1992; Kowalski 2003). For contemporary Saskatchewan can only be described as a hostile environment for worker co-operation. Like the visionary pioneers of pooling (Knutilla 1994) and consumer co-operation (Phalen 1977) — whose ideas were ridiculed in their day — today's co-operative innovators will have to struggle to overcome deeply ingrained ideological and cultural prejudices against the model.

Without adequate information about the model's strengths, weaknesses, and applications, people are naturally inclined to pre-judge. One index of the under-representation of the co-operative business model generally is a recent study of 22 Canadian business textbooks (Quarter, et al. 2007). Only 35 out of 11,375 pages addressed co-operatives, despite the movement's deep roots and its clear dominance in certain regional markets — particularly in agriculture, credit, and retailing. The cultural marginalization of the much smaller, newer,

and more culturally dissonant worker co-operative model is even more pronounced. Heavy investments in education and communication will thus be required.

The publication of *The Worker Co-operator* magazine from the mid-eighties until 1992 provided important (if ultimately unsustainable) support to English-speaking Canada's far-flung movement at a key moment in its history. Like the transitory publications of the agrarian and co-operative press that informed and encouraged early co-operators, its influence far exceeded its lifespan. It helped knit together a community of activists, developers, and worker co-operative members. In 1991, they would create a national federation under the umbrella of the English-speaking co-operative movement's apex organization, the Canadian Co-operative Association (Corcoran 2007).

Important efforts have been made in recent years to build an online presence and community for community economic development (CCEDNet 2011), co-operative development (CCA 2011; SCA 2011), and worker co-operative development (CWCF 2011). Yet, the worker co-operative option still struggles for light under the long shadow cast by the dominant business culture. The idea of collective entrepreneurship is anathema to many entrepreneurs — or would-be entrepreneurs — who distrust sharing ownership, control, and rewards. Instead, we have been socialized to worship celebrity CEOs and the decisive effect of a strong, highly motivated leader who can “get things done”; we instinctively distrust structures that dilute that leadership. The very notion of worker co-operation cuts against the grain of this strong man cultural ethos (Greenberg1986).

The marketplace society has undermined our faith in collective action for the common good — including co-operativism. Replacing this social solidarity is the mean-spirited survivalism of the Hobbesian “war of all against all.” In this market-driven reality, life is “nasty, brutish, and short,” and a misanthropic view of human nature as selfish and untrustworthy prevails. However, what perhaps over-shadows collective enterprise in all its varied forms most is the idealization of entrepreneurial individualism. Building on the “hidden curriculum” of competitive achievement in our schools (Margolis 2001), the iconic entrepreneurial genius-hero has deep roots in the dominant political ideology of corporate liberalism and the myth of meritocracy. It pervades the business press and entertainment culture and defines our very understanding of entrepreneurship. Donald Trump is only one poster-child for this tendency to attribute business success to exceptional individuals who are strong enough to slay competitors in ruthless market competition and thus deserve exorbitant compensation. Conversely, the implication of this notion is that mere mortals cannot succeed in business,



and that “great men” may even be defeated by business models that fetter their command and control. This deeply anti-democratic mythology poses a formidable cultural barrier to popular economic action generally and to worker co-operation in particular.

In English-speaking North America, entrepreneurial individualism is now deeply entrenched. The popular Canadian television program *Dragon’s Den* celebrates this lone ranger model of entrepreneurship — as necessarily defined and driven by investors. Much as the reality TV genre generally demeans the working poor as trailer park trash, this program humbles and shames would-be entrepreneurs before a panel of expert investors who define each project in terms of shareholder return. Projects that may benefit the dragons generate exciting offers and counter-offers and the worthy new entrepreneurs sparkle in proportion to those monetary appraisals. By contrast, entrepreneurs whose projects provide goods or services with high social value but little profit potential are shunned, rejected, and even publicly berated. This ritualized weekly performance of investor-focused evaluation of business ideas in prime-time drives the very notion of collective entrepreneurship further to the margins of the popular imagination.

Through this ideological prism, the democratic ethos of co-operation seems deeply antiquated. Worker co-operatives, in particular, seem counter-intuitive, if not subversive. The portrayal of the Hollywood worker, from Archie Bunker to Ralph Kramden to Homer Simpson — as unintelligent, incapable buffoons — only further undermines popular confidence in a worker-led business model. The prospects for worker co-operative development therefore hinge on overcoming the systematic derogation of democratic values and the working class in media culture and everyday life.

Since it is workers who ultimately drive and carry the development of worker co-operatives, overcoming feelings of working class inferiority and self-doubt (Sennett and Cobb 1993) and distrust of democratic collective action requires a serious alternative campaign for their democratic empowerment (Benello 1982). Building the confidence of workers and development partners alike in their ability to succeed requires the same kind of aggressive educational and cultural campaigns that defined previous waves of the co-operative movement (Baldacchino 1990). Education for worker co-operation must do more than simply inform workers of abstract principles or technical details; it must culturally affirm, engage, and empower them to build and self-manage co-operatives. A narrowly conceived communication strategy to simply promote the model will fall on deaf ears unless more vigorous efforts are also taken to challenge the cultural monopoly investors presently hold over entrepreneurial agency.

Beyond discretely targeted interventions to new start-ups, co-operative education must also address the wider public with a compelling message of the possibilities of popular power. A broader cultural strategy must reassert the co-operative tradition in the popular imaginary and re-articulate the role of working people in that tradition. It must also raise the profile and build the resonance of worker co-operation. Much as early co-operation in Saskatchewan was a complex cultural project of building meaning, identity, and community as well as elevators and retail stores, worker co-operative development will also require vigorous and sustained educational and cultural interventions to invoke, expand, and revive that tradition. An inclusive communication strategy will be crucial to effective organizing campaigns that appeal to, affirm, and inspire workers to action. One instructive example of co-operative cultural action in the online age is the *Building Communities: Creating Social and Economic Well-Being* virtual exhibition (Centre for the Study of Co-operatives 2011).

Recruiting social movement activists, in general, and trade unionists and co-operators, in particular, is one way to reach out to leaders with the skills and values required to drive — and support — worker co-operative campaigns. Cornforth et al. (1988) also suggest attracting entrepreneurial actors from areas outside traditional business sectors. They suggest civil servants, voluntary sector leaders, community organizers, and educators are more likely to share the democratic skills and values required to build effective work-groups. However, engaging non-traditional entrepreneurs implies a need to support effective retraining. While the Western (later the Canadian) Co-operative College once trained organizers in Saskatchewan (Crewe 2001), and several university programs in community economic development have emerged across Canada, no such training or movement-building forum is currently available in the province. No less than building financial and technical assistance, re-creating adult education capacity for co-operative development will have to be central to new development campaigns.

**Targeting at-risk businesses** — Cornforth et al. (1988) have proposed another solution to the entrepreneurial problem: to focus on so-called rescue or *phoenix co-operatives*. In a job-threatening situation — such as a plant closure — workers may be highly motivated to consider a worker buy-out, but seldom have the knowledge or support to be able to act quickly. As a result, these rescues are more common in the mature worker co-operative sectors like Italy's, where trade unions have developed the skills and response readiness to intervene effectively (Cornforth 1982). In Québec, there are also some examples of trade union support in such situations, such as the CSN's involvement in converting an abandoned Goodyear tire plant to a rubber recycling facility (Quarter 1992).

Rescuing any at-risk business is difficult. It is a particularly fraught undertaking for workers — who typically lack management skills and ready access to financing. The risks are even greater in less developed regional sectors — with weak support structures and shallow pools of experience and expertise. Discussions between the trade union and worker co-operative movements on the Prairies thus led to the 2008 formation of the Prairie (now Western) Labour Worker Co-operative Council. With the support of the Ohio Employee Ownership Center, participants hope to build their ability to intervene in situations such as plant shut-downs in the West (CWCF 2011). This Council also represents an important foundation for a wider dialogue on the possibilities for union-led co-operative conversions.

**Targeting retirement successions** — In Québec, where efforts to support phoenix co-operatives met considerable political resistance in the seventies (Fournier, 1976), greater store has recently been placed in targeting *retiring proprietorships*. In these cases, the impetus for a change of ownership is not a precarious firm's short-term crisis. Instead, it is the long-range succession planning of a viable enterprise; it may be shut down for lack of buyers, a particular risk in rural areas and more remote and vulnerable communities. Targeting retiring — rather than imperilled — proprietors for conversion efforts benefits sellers, buyers, and the long-range viability of the business for these reasons:

- reduces risk to worker-owners who are not forced into crisis management;
- involves workers early in preparing to assume ownership
- ensures a reasonable period for transition to worker ownership, including group-building, decision-making, and training
- provides for an orderly transition of the business, without losing customers or spooking suppliers in a crisis context
- offers an incentive for workers to invest in, and build, the business as if they already were owners — even before the actual conversion — to the advantage of the retiring owner and buyers alike
- provides a contractual incentive (and obligation) for owners to share knowledge, skills, and experience — something they are generally reluctant to do for fear of “training their competition”

The retirement succession campaign in Québec builds on three decades of successful worker co-operative development, and is promoted through a network of eleven state-funded but sector-managed regional development co-operatives (Savard, 2007; Diamantopoulos, Sept., 2010). The staff of these CDRs stimulate and support co-operative entre-

preneurship — much as the fieldworkers of the early agrarian co-operative movement helped to organize retail co-operatives, credit unions, and insurance mutuals in Saskatchewan (MacPherson 1979; G. Fairbairn 1984; Fairbairn 2005).

The Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation has called for a pan-Canadian strategy to address the coming crisis in business successions, as boomers near retirement in record numbers and viable businesses face closure for lack of conventional buyers (Hough 2005). However, beyond its relatively small venture capital fund and its developers' network — a loose association of development consultants across the country — it has neither Québec's depth of experience nor its base of regional organization. Much work in building meaningful support structures remains to be done in Saskatchewan to capture this development potential.

**Targeting alternatives to privatization** — Conversions to worker ownership have also been promoted as an alternative to privatization. Cornforth et al. (1988) suggest worker co-operators come to an understanding with the trade union movement about the necessary conditions and terms on which such strategies should be undertaken. There is an obvious role here for the WLWCC. As the CSN-backed co-operativisation of ambulance services in Québec (Côté 2007) illustrates, worker co-operatives can provide an efficient, effective, and unionized alternative to private sector and state provision. Indeed, in this campaign, the CSN organized its own dedicated unit, the *MSE Groupes Conseiles*, to provide technical assistance to worker co-operatives (Quarter 1992). It also lent the support of its own credit union, the *Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins*, and its own labour-sponsored venture capital fund, *FondAction* (Diamantopoulos 2011). Finally, it repurposed its expertise in collective bargaining to help secure decent service contracts between the co-operatives and the province. This union-backed development model (Côté 2007) demonstrates a more systematic approach to socializing entrepreneurship.

**Scaling-up development capacity** — In the most advanced worker co-operative sectors, entrepreneurial initiative is often taken on by specialized development units. Examples include the CSN's support structures, Québec's CDR network (Côté 2007) and the Co-operative Development Agency network in Britain in the eighties (Cornforth et al. 1988). In each case, developmental movements assume ever-greater responsibility for expanding the co-operative sector (Adeler, 2009) by formalizing co-operative entrepreneurship within their structures. Mondragon, for example, established its own university to train its worker-owners. It set up its own bank and research and development co-operative. They finance and plan new

worker co-operative start-ups, and spin-off new ones from larger, older co-operatives (Whyte and Whyte 1991). In Denmark, the labour movement established a Co-operative Finance Fund in 1953 to support co-operative rescues and start-ups (Cornforth 1982). In Italy, co-operative consortia jointly bid on multi-faceted contracts, like the construction and operation of hospitals (Ammirato 1996). This kind of macro-level movement co-ordination supports emerging co-operatives by combining their bidding and buying power with more mature co-operatives. Pooling finance, resources, and entrepreneurial efforts all bring practical life to the principle of “co-operation among co-operatives” (ICA 2011). Development networks, agencies, and consortia all demonstrate new potential for sector-building. The deeper economies, synergies, and development possibilities to be gained through inter-co-operation in Saskatchewan’s sizeable and diverse co-operative sector, and an expanded working relationship with the labour movement (Cornforth 1982), are likely considerable.

The entrepreneurial problem helps explain the lagging development of the worker co-operative sector in Saskatchewan. However, social innovations — from the co-operative support organization to educational and cultural campaigns to consortia strategies — all demonstrate potential solutions. Every previous wave of co-operative organization in Saskatchewan has solved this collective action problem. Worker co-operative sectors around the world today have solved it. These innovative approaches provide the basis for home-grown solutions to stimulate and support democratic worker entrepreneurship. The cases of Manitoba and Québec likely have the most to offer a sector development strategy in Saskatchewan.

### **Some Contextual Barriers in Contemporary Saskatchewan**

In addition to structural challenges, many of which afflict worker co-operatives around the world — and for which leading regions have developed innovative solutions — the Saskatchewan context poses a distinct set of opportunities and challenges.

#### *Legal, Reporting, and Definitional Issues*

One key issue that currently obstructs coherent sector development is the lack of modern legal tools, reporting mechanisms, and normative understandings of inter-sector distinctions and relationships in Saskatchewan. Measures to modernize in these areas would allow for more orderly incorporation of these businesses, more accurate accounting for sector activity, and more coherent approaches to sector-building.

Accurate estimates for worker co-operatives in Saskatchewan are currently difficult to arrive at due to these legal, reporting, and definitional problems. Legally, enabling legislation for “employment co-operatives” is restrictive, pushing workers to incorporate outside the category. The Act requires that these co-operatives have a minimum of three members. This excludes small start-ups. Also, the Act requires that the term “employment co-operative” be used in the trading name of the co-operative. An awkward neologism, this term is not in common circulation elsewhere. Many worker co-operators object to the welfarist connotation as undermining confidence in the marketplace — branding their businesses as sheltered workshops for those unable otherwise to get work. These legal restrictions drive some worker co-operators to incorporate outside the category. Since there is no provision for “worker co-operatives,” they thus disappear into categories such as “community service co-operatives.” This is the first factor distorting worker co-operative estimates in Saskatchewan: outdated and restrictive legislation that drives these firms to incorporate provisions that ill suit them.

In terms of reporting, references to “employment co-operatives” are highly unreliable, not simply due to low reporting levels (Hammond Ketilson, et al., 1998) but due to chaotic classification practices. The co-operative registry does not classify co-operatives by structure but rather lists them by the “nature of their business.” As a result, the only “employment co-operative” to show up on the official rolls at the time of writing is listed as an “employment agency” so it’s not even clear that this is, in fact, a worker co-operative. Furthermore, what are *La Co-opérative de Publications Fransaskoises Ltee.* or Hullabaloo Publishing Workers Co-operative Ltd.? Are they listed as community service co-operatives or publishing co-operatives or both? Clearly these examples illustrate a wider problem of incoherent, overlapping categories. This is the second factor distorting estimates: outdated classification practices that make it impossible to accurately measure the scope and scale of worker co-operation in Saskatchewan.

Finally, there is the problem of normative definition. There is simply no clear consensus on what constitutes a worker co-operative in Saskatchewan. Instead, we find a large, ill-defined cluster of co-operatives that might or might not be considered to be worker co-operatives. For legal and bureaucratic reasons outlined above, none is incorporated as a “worker co-operative” (since there is no such category in Saskatchewan) and many resist registering as “employment co-operatives.” This is thus both an invisible and amorphous sector. This is a dilemma conditioned by problematic legal definitions and state reporting conventions but it is ultimately a matter of self-definition and thus a political question: a question of whether

members of a given co-operative have a sense of affiliation and belonging to a common movement. Sadly, only three co-operatives active in Saskatchewan are members of the national movement federation, the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation. By this cultural-political measure of movement belonging, the Saskatchewan sector is in dire straits indeed.

Moreover, there are also many borderland worker co-operatives that might equally be considered “social co-operatives,” if legislation for this form existed in Saskatchewan. Examples include the Crocus Co-operative in Saskatoon, the Crackerjack Co-operative in Regina, and the (now defunct) Churchill Greenhouse Co-operative in Moose Jaw, each developed to create work for people with disabilities. While several artisan, social, and multi-stakeholder co-operatives belong to the national worker co-operative federation, there is no organizational or discursive basis for such an alliance between these groups in Saskatchewan — even if there was a provincial worker co-operative federation to formally unify them. Similarly, several forms of producer co-operatives that might elsewhere be affiliated to the worker co-operative movement also have no articulated relationship to worker co-operation in Saskatchewan.

Unlike the clear positioning of forestry co-operatives with the Québec worker co-operative movement, for example, it is unclear whether farmers’ markets, taxi co-operatives, fishers’ co-operatives, or artisans’ markets might be better regrouped with worker co-operatives provincially to form a more productive alliance for their interests. Although there are a considerable number of registered farmers’ markets and fishers’ co-operatives in Saskatchewan, neither of these groups have any formal organization or voice within provincial co-operative movement structures (i.e., the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association).

However, the potential for movement expansion is demonstrated by Québec, where two provincial federations have been formalized; one draws together worker co-operatives and youth co-operatives and the other represents forestry, worker-shareholder, and solidarity co-operatives. While building a coherent Saskatchewan sector will require legal modernization and the reform of reporting practices, it will also require an effort to build a provincial network or federation, perhaps in alliance with aligned co-operative forms that share their interests and values. For example, could Saskatchewan’s 19 fishers’ co-operatives, 23 farmers’ markets, and 2 craft markets be regrouped within the CWCF as part of a broader sector-building strategy — just as forestry once provided the critical mass and organizational basis for the Québec sector? Indeed, the international worker co-operative federation includes

“producers’ co-operatives from different sectors: construction, industrial production, general services, transport, intellectual skills, artisanal activities, health, social care” (CICOPA 2011). This is the third factor distorting estimates of worker co-operation in Saskatchewan: fuzzy boundaries between “real” worker co-operatives and worker-inclusive or non-traditional worker-based cousins that might be understood to be part of the worker co-operative family but for which there is a lack of bridging social capital and bridging discursive frames to build a unified movement. While there are a wide variety of disconnected producers’ co-operatives and hybrid forms of worker co-operation that might be welded together into a unified movement, such a movement would have a lot of cultural-political work to do to reach out to, accommodate, and unify social, worker-shareholder, and solidarity co-operative forms and distinct forms of producer co-operation such as fishers’, farmers’, and artisans’ co-operatives.

#### *Demography and Worker Co-operative Development*

Saskatchewan’s sparse demography makes organizing development coalitions to launch worker co-operatives difficult. For example, Montréal brings together a critical mass of workers seeking employment, trade union staff and resources to support them, and other movement activists and academics interested in expanding and supporting the co-operative sector. It is a metropolis of 3.8 million. By contrast, Saskatchewan’s largest city, Saskatoon, has a population of just over a quarter million (Statistics Canada 2010a).

Late urbanization, a lower rate of union organization, and less populous and dynamic movement milieux militate against comparable worker co-operative development in Saskatchewan — as surely as the asphalt prevents agricultural co-operation in downtown Toronto. This does not mean there aren’t opportunities to advance the model, particularly in the rapidly growing cities of Regina and Saskatoon (Statistics Canada, 2010b) and rural and remote locations. It simply means that delayed worker co-operative development — and more difficult development — are to be expected from the dispersed population of this historically agrarian province.

Despite Saskatchewan’s demography, there is a strong tradition of social innovation. This includes deeply rooted traditions of voluntary action and business model innovation (including crown corporations, other co-operative forms, credit unions, insurance mutuals, community enterprise, and band enterprise). While rural traditions may create some inertial drag in meeting urban needs and pursuing urban opportunities (Kristjanson, Baker, and



Everson 1964), Saskatoon and Regina are now among the fastest growing cities in the country, as Table 3 illustrates. This creates unique challenges and opportunities: to help a swelling segment of urban business owners approaching retirement find buyers and to meet the employment needs of population segments such as Aboriginal people, youth, and new immigrants.

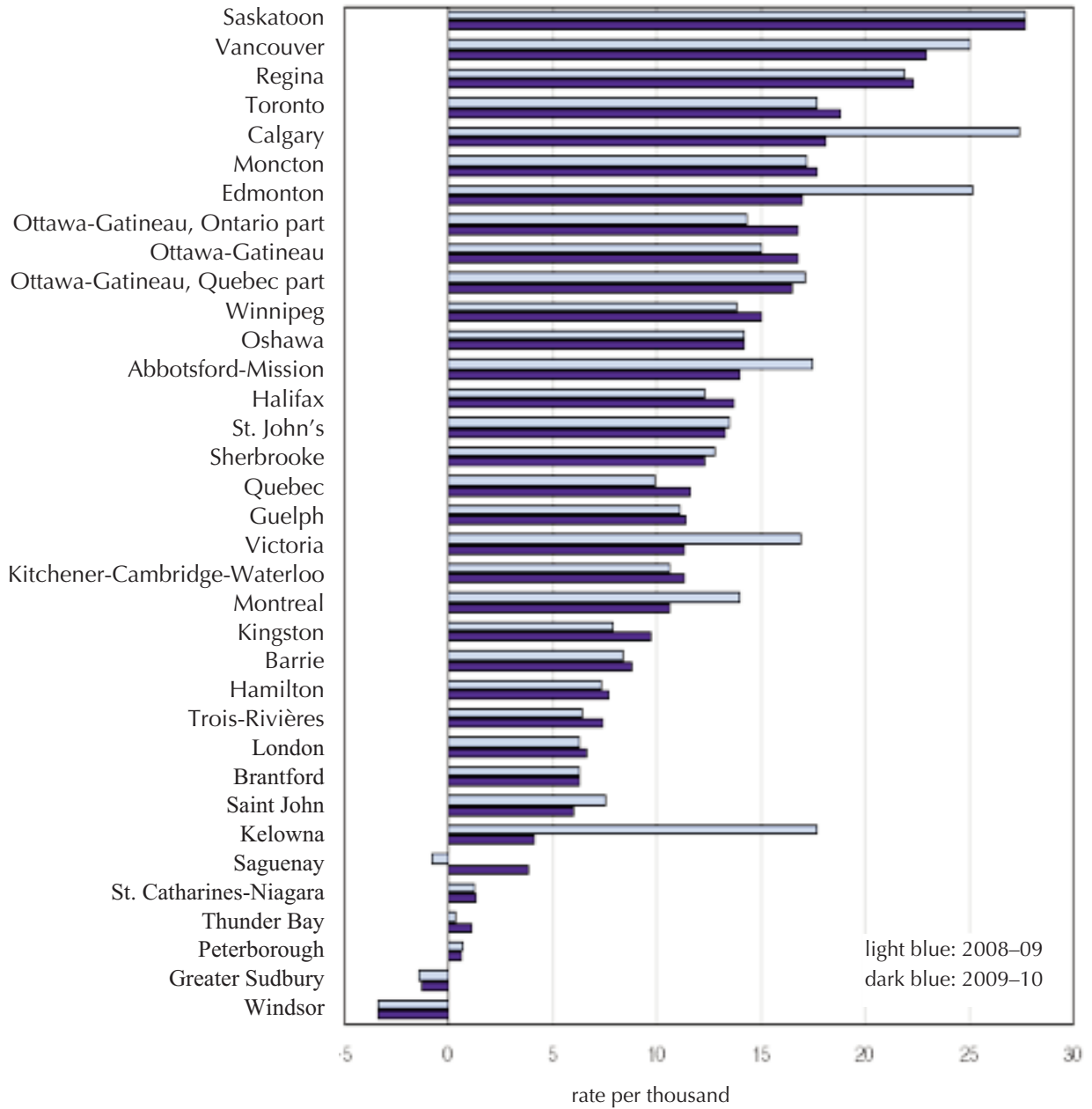
However, worker co-operative succession plans can also help remedy the potential closure of key rural and remote community services on proprietor retirement; this tool can provide a vital prop to the revitalization of these strained communities. The model can also help empower ethnically mixed memberships to take over urban and rural businesses, ameliorating economic and social divisions. Indeed, while the traditional co-operative social base drew from the white settler society, an Aboriginal baby boom and the boom in Aboriginal educational attainments creates new needs, potential, and momentum for development — on reserve, in the North, and in the inner-cities. This worker co-operative can help structure economic action in low-income communities.

#### *Unemployment and Labour Mobility*

Out-migration from Saskatchewan in cyclical economic downturns — and periods of unemployment — has become a common practice. This contrasts sharply with jurisdictions such as Québec, where language and culture act as barriers to labour mobility. This has decreased the historic incentive and pressure to develop innovative job-creation strategies in Saskatchewan (Diamantopoulos 2011). More recently, the allure of the oil patch in Alberta and the booming resource sector in Saskatchewan provides further disincentives to workers who might otherwise consider risk-taking in new business development. With low unemployment rates, rising wages, and boomer retirements triggering skills shortages, the short-term prospects for worker co-operative start-ups in Saskatchewan seem gloomy.

Pockets of persistent structural unemployment among Aboriginal and new immigrant populations therefore suggest a more targeted approach may be appropriate. These high need, economically excluded populations stand to benefit most from this mechanism to pool resources for self-employment. Given the legacy of colonialism, including the historic exclusion of Aboriginal people from the workforce and the world of business, pre-development work and group-building is particularly important. For different reasons, many new immigrants also have special transition-to-work challenges. Like many Aboriginal people and well-educated young people, recent immigrants are often employed well below their educa-

Table 3. Population growth rates by census metropolitan area, Canada



Source: Statistics Canada (2010b).

tion level. They suffer under-employment and talent under-employment (Livingstone 2004). Deepening casualization of labour and a two-tier labour market are likely to increase demand for alternatives to part-time and precarious employment for these groups. In this area,

the examples of Winnipeg organizations like the Native Families Economic Development Corporation (Hammond Ketilson, Fulton, Fairbairn, and Bold 1992) and SEED Winnipeg — which develops co-operatives with young, Aboriginal, and newly immigrated people in an urban context — may provide useful lessons. While Winnipeg is triple the size of Saskatoon or Regina, it has a similar demographic structure. The CWCF developers network, CCEDNet, which has a fieldworker based in Winnipeg, and the Manitoba Co-operative Association (MCA) all represent natural diffusion channels for such inter-city movement learning.

### *Movement Culture*

The historic roots of the Saskatchewan co-operative movement intertwine with the legacy of agrarian socialism (Lipset 1959). However, the declining importance of the agricultural economy has eroded the farm movement. It has also undermined the historic social base and vitality of the province's co-operative movement. The privatization of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the right-ward shift in political values, and the rise of consumer culture have undercut confidence in democratic collective action, including worker co-operative formation (Diamantopoulos 2011). In the absence of aggressive action to re-vision co-operation and sell that vision to a new generation, the co-operative option will lose resonance and its capacity for cultural expansion.

In Winnipeg, it is instructive to note that pioneering workers' co-operatives include Neechi Foods — an inner-city Aboriginal grocery and hub of community organizing — (Hammond Ketilson et al. 1992; Findlay and Wuttunee 2007; Neechi Foods Co-operative 2011) and the Mondragon Bookstore and Coffee House — named after the legendary Mondragon region in Spain (Mondragon Bookstore and Coffee House 2011). It seems that creating high profile demonstration projects, and “scenes” where movement culture can emerge — and near-peers can exchange ideas, experiences, find partners, and define projects — may have played an important role in the acceptance and diffusion of this innovation in Winnipeg. Their public character also underlines the importance of building a living movement culture and the pivotal role of movement idealists in driving organizing campaigns. Although established co-operative leaders may be substantially more conservative and managerial in their outlook — and least likely to place their confidence in Aboriginal women in the inner-city or anarcho-syndicalist youth — effective development requires the recruitment and cultivation of activist cadres from social movements where the model matches real

employment needs and democratic aspirations. As Hough et al. (2010) argue, the most important success factor for worker co-operatives is the people. Just as the campaign for wheat pooling needed leaders like E.A. Partridge (Knutilla 1994) and the campaign for the world's first co-operative oil refinery needed activists like Harry Fowler (Phalen 1977), today's worker co-operative movement needs "highly motivated, values-based founders" (Hough et al. 2010, 18).

The implication of this finding seems to be that Saskatchewan's co-operative movement needs to re-invest in movement-building activities, including an aggressive campaign of support to high profile, youth-involved, culturally relevant co-operatives that can serve as demonstration projects for those motivated by co-operative values. Like the Aboriginal workers or new immigrants employed beneath their talents in an otherwise low unemployment economy, idealistic and energetic young activists are natural leaders for worker co-operative development. They have a higher risk threshold since they are less likely to have mortgages to pay or families to support and they have more flexibility to put in the extra hours it takes to realize their dreams.

This "post-materialist" segment — motivated by a cause, democratic values, and quality of work-life — is particularly important in the founding stages of a sector. In a low unemployment period in the provincial economy, founders are less likely to be employment-seeking pragmatists and more likely to be values-based visionaries. Since these early adopters also tend to be college-educated, they are more likely to have the knowledge and skills to succeed. Youthful, well-educated, and values-driven, this segment is more likely to lend support to subsequent take-offs, train new movement developers, and build the necessary representative structures for a democratic and sustainable movement. This early adopter segment needs to be an early target in the sector-building phase, with less youthful and values-driven segments more likely to follow their lead in times of higher unemployment if the early adopters can demonstrate the utility of the model by establishing viable and visible businesses. Again, the CWCF, CCEDNet, and the MCA provide important links to the worker co-operative scene in Winnipeg, an urban context roughly similar to that of Regina and Saskatoon.

#### *Patrons and Partners*

Every major co-operative movement in Canadian history has had the organizational support of a parent movement, institution, or government agency (Hammond Ketilson et al. 1992). Winnipeg's new worker co-operatives have had access to a local CCEDNet fieldworker, SEED

Winnipeg, a number of local CWCF accredited developers, and provincial program and personnel supports. Not coincidentally, the Québec sector — which leads the country — has the most robust support. By contrast, the worker co-operative option is largely orphaned in Saskatchewan.

Over the last four decades, the province of Saskatchewan has reduced its commitment to co-operative development (Diamantopoulos 2011), adopting an “inquiry driven model” (Co-operatives Directorate 1997) that disavows active promotion or sustained support to emerging co-operatives. Arguably, established Saskatchewan co-operatives presently engage in a form of free riding behaviour: having benefited from sponsorship in their founding periods — from government, parent movements, or other co-operatives — they are now reluctant (or unclear how) to support new sectors, including worker co-operatives. This is a problem of perverse incentives and narrow, short-term strategic perspective. It is also a problem of movement education, as many leaders are unaware of their own co-operatives’ history —including the debt those co-operatives owe to developmental movement commitments in their founding periods. The stagnation of co-operative movements is certainly not unique to the contemporary Saskatchewan context; their democratic and developmental commitments tend to atrophy with time (Maaniche in Crewe 2001; Develterre 1992, Fairbairn, Bold, Fulton, Hammond Ketilson, and Ish 1991; Staber 1992; Cornforth et al. 1988) and therefore require periodic interventions to renew their democratic vitality and commitment to development.

Similarly, the established co-operatives have often drifted into a managerial focus on their own operations, and an “apolitical” posture: and the labour movement has tended to retreat from the plight of the unemployed and “social movement unionism” into a “bread and butter” focus on collective bargaining. Worker co-operatives have been overlooked, neglected, and undermined by this broad-based social movement retreat from co-operative development in Saskatchewan. Re-forging these social movement ties can help build new bridges between activist workers, progressive trade unions and co-operatives, and worker co-operative projects.

Finally, there is an important role for the research community to play in investigating best practices, clarifying issues, and making specific recommendations for particular courses of action. During the eighties resurgence, research at the UK’s Open University (Cornforth et al. 1988), the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives (Axworthy 1985; Axworthy and Perry 1988), and by the state (National Task Force on Co-operative Development 1984) all made

significant contributions to English-language sector's reflection, strategy, and action. This kind of focused attention will be as critical to the next wave of worker co-operative sector activity as it was to the eighties boom.

## THE PROSPECTS

This report has outlined some of the significant benefits and challenges of worker co-operative development in Saskatchewan. This section outlines some of the things that might be done to build a more solid foundation for the sector over the next five years. There are no magical solutions or quick fixes here as it is a central contention of this report that there are no short-cuts to co-operative movement-building. A successful strategy will require serious and sustained attention by dedicated staff and supportive partners. It will take time, work, organization, and resources. The focus is therefore on long-range capacity building: to build sector leadership, development infrastructure, and partnerships that are durable.

Paradoxically, relative prosperity and low unemployment overall in Saskatchewan makes this a good time to establish a solid foundation for development; when the next jobs crisis arrives, the sector may be small but it will be well-established, well-prepared to offer proven examples of success, and well-equipped to offer up leadership on a broader scale. In the meanwhile, worker co-operation offers a remedy to values-driven activists and high-need populations being left out by investor-led job creation and mainstream prosperity.

The recommendations below focus on key priorities identified in this report.

### **Build Leadership**

Build sector-driven development capacity.

*Build sector leadership:* Build a *sector-driven strategy* that recognizes the importance of frontline experience, expertise, and movement networks — and the importance of building regional capacity through *co-operative support organizations* — by contracting activities below to Saskatchewan-based developers and experts recommended by the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation.

*Build sector partnerships:* Involve partners such as the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the Canadian Community Economic Development Network, the Prairie Labour Worker Co-operative Council, the CWCF, the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, and Co-op Ventures in a *working group* to establish the scope and objectives of a 5-year worker co-operative development campaign. This group should:

- develop a 5-year work-plan
- secure project funding
- contract fundraising and the organization of fact-finding tours (to Winnipeg, Québec, Mondragon, Emilia-Romagna) to “show, not tell” what can be achieved at the leadership level, and strengthen partners’ moral, political, and financial support. (These leaders could also support educational campaigns as speakers and ambassadors for worker co-operative development. The British Columbia Co-operative Association’s summer tours to Emilia-Romagna provide one model.)

### **Build the Base**

*Engage the co-operative movement:* Measures might include meetings with leaders such as the SCA executive, the SCA development committee, and the boards and senior management of major affiliates; providing speakers for annual general meetings and SCA Summer Youth Camp keynotes or workshops; providing leaflets, posters, and DVDs for member distribution through co-operative and credit union channels (for example loans officers); submitting information to SCA’s *Co-operative Spotlight* and other co-operative, credit union, and insurance mutual newsletters; and providing links and posts for SCA and affiliate websites.

*Engage the labour movement:* Measures might include meetings with leaders of the SFL executive council, key SFL committees, and major affiliates; building the WLWCC; providing speakers for annual convention, Prairie School for Union Women, and SFL Youth Summer Camp keynotes or workshops; providing leaflets, posters, and DVDs to union locals; submitting information to the *SFL Reporter* and other affiliate newsletters; and providing links and posts for SFL and affiliate websites.

## **Broaden the Base**

Build a popular movement coalition in support of the values of democratic socio-economic development in Saskatchewan.

Contract organization of a (series of) roundtable(s) to involve a wider circle of movement partners to discuss how co-operative tools can advance movement objectives — from employment to fair trade to proximity service rescues to green co-ops (Canadian Federation of Students-Sask., URPIRG, Saskatchewan Environmental Society, National Farmers Union, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Open Door Society, Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation, etc).

Hold a broad-based popular movement *summit on economic alternatives*, at which worker co-operation figures prominently.

Promote adoption of a *statement of movement principles* like the Neechi Principles (Appendix B), the 2010 Declaration of the National Summit on a People Centred Economy (Appendix C), or the 2006 Montréal Declaration, presented at the conclusion of the Social and Solidarity Economy Summit (Appendix D), as a popular education and movement-building tool.

Promote this declaration as a guide to movement organizations' policy, procurement, and member education.

Promote the formation of a broad-based *social movement coalition organization*, like the *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, to lobby and organize politically for these core principles and programs that reflect them (a provincial chapter of CCEDNet provides one possible, inter-sectoral vehicle).

Contract *consultations and involvement of partners* in the development of a guiding document to present to the Saskatchewan summit, *organization* of the summit, and in post-summit *promotions and educational efforts*.

## **Build State Partnership**

Lobby for formal policy and program recognition of co-operative and community economic development.



Promote the organization of a CED or Social Economy Secretariat to act as an inter-departmental contact point in government and to drive policy innovation.

Promote the declaration (above) as a guide to state policy and program development (much as the Province of Manitoba's Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet has adopted a CED Policy Framework and CED Lens [Neamtan and Downing 2005]).

Modernize legal and reporting tools to more effectively reflect the needs of worker co-operatives and to ensure accurate measurement of development progress.

### **Targeted Problem-Solving Activities**

Address *the entrepreneurial problem* and build formation rates by forming a *research and education working group* to inform and:

- contract overall plan implementation to a co-operative support organization (to build regional capacity)
- contract the development of a phased, multi-year communications strategy (including *social movement outreach*, *professional outreach*, and *public outreach plans*)
- contract development and delivery of targeted educational modules, ad mattes, brochures, posters, videos, etc.
- support the efforts of the WLWCC
- contract feasibility analysis of a retirement succession campaign
- contract feasibility analysis of regionalized support services to co-operative development on the CDR model
- contract analysis of under-developed industry sectors and innovation-transfer opportunities to replicate worker co-operatives in other regions (e.g., student or forestry co-operatives, proximity service rescues)

Address *the capitalization problem* by creating a provincial sector-state *co-operative finance working group* to study social finance innovations, including legal and financial expert advisors recommended by the worker co-operative sector. The group should develop options and make detailed recommendations for action within one year. Technical studies should be funded by the province.

Feasibility studies in this area may include:

- creating a co-operative venture capital pool to provide appropriately structured, patient capital to emerging and expanding Saskatchewan co-operatives. This may be achieved by extending tax credits to established co-operatives that wish to contribute, modeled on the new Manitoba co-operative tax credit plan (Manitoba 2011).
- establishing an RRSP-eligible vehicle that Saskatchewan credit unions could promote, market, and manage through their membership and retail channels. (The Desjardins Regional and Co-operative Development Fund in Québec provides one example of how this might be achieved.)
- establishing a labour-sponsored investment fund. Since there is no social investment fund in Saskatchewan presently, and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is not presently sponsoring a labour-sponsored venture capital fund, there may be a role for inter-movement co-operation on this initiative. (In Québec, the QFL’s Solidarity Fund channels a considerable new flow of investment capital to provincial development. The CSN’s *FondAction* has developed a similar strategy, targeting social economy enterprises — including worker co-operatives.)
- lobbying for legislation to enable individual co-operatives to create CED investment funds tailored to supporters of their own enterprise with tax credits similar to the labour-sponsored venture capital fund programs. (The Nova Scotia model, recently replicated in PEI, provides a template.)
- increasing tax credit incentives to workers who invest in their own co-operatives. (In Québec, the tax credit was pegged at 150% in the early sector-building phase to overcome this strong disincentive.)
- promoting restoration of the province’s co-operative loan guarantee program
- promoting preferential procurement from emerging co-operatives in the co-operative sector
- promoting an “adopt a co-operative” program within the sector, with established co-operatives returning a percentage of annual profits to an emerging co-operative (including but not limited to worker co-operatives) that needs development assistance for defined expansion needs. (This could be integrated into a “Brand Co-op” sector marketing campaign, to underline the role of the co-operative movement in building community while meeting the financing needs of emerging co-operatives and the social marketing objectives of established co-operatives.)

Address *managerial and democratic work problems* by:

- lobbying for “flow-through” project funds in development initiatives delivered by co-operative support organizations. These could begin by building already existing Saskatchewan worker co-operatives into best practice models and next “advising the advisors” in government agencies and the professions on their referral options. (A model for this initiative is the 2001, province-funded “Growing Co-ops” initiative in BC. In this initiative, a technical assistance group, Devco, was contracted to provide co-operative development support to one co-operative in each of three regions of the province, while also delivering training to support development capacity in each of those regions [Diamantopoulos, in press].)
- lobbying for the restoration of the Co-operative Development Assistance Program to help finance technical assistance

Address *the limits to growth problem* by:

- exploring opportunities for consortia joint-purchasing and joint-bidding in addition to capitalization measures
- contracting a technical study on model legislation for Saskatchewan for worker co-operatives, worker-shareholder co-operatives, and multi-stakeholder (or “solidarity”) co-operatives

Address *demographic transition* by:

- exploring retirement succession opportunities, including a fact-finding tour of best practices in Québec, a technical feasibility study, and a fully detailed campaign proposal

Address *structural unemployment and labour mobility* by:

- exploring targeted recruitment to young people, Aboriginal people, and new immigrants, with a fact-finding tour to Winnipeg
- contracting research on successful worker co-operative experiences with these three segments
- contracting an outreach plan to these target segments

Address *movement culture* by:

- targeting communications to youth, including advertising, campus and social movement youth camp out-reach (SCA, SFL, NFU, SCIC, PIRG, etc.)

Address *the need to build development partnerships* by:

- targeting ongoing communications (a newsletter?) to co-operative sector, labour movement, and state leadership to encourage involvement and shared practical and financial leadership to establish the sector
- ensuring regular (monthly?) working group meetings with main CSO contractor, report-backs to lead partners (quarterly?), and secondary stakeholders (bi-annually?) to maintain buy-in and momentum

## APPENDIX A

### Solidarity Finance Mechanisms in Québec

#### 1) Development Capital

Name	<i>Fonds de Solidarité</i>	<i>FondAction</i>	CRCQ
Objective	Protect workers retirement income while stimulating Québec's economy through strategic investments	Protect worker retirement income while investing in enterprises to maintain and create jobs in Québec	To contribute to Québec's economic development and to further the growth of its resource regions
Total Assets	\$7.3 billion	\$635.6 million	\$733 million
Source of Funding	Worker contribution, private	Worker savings, private	Private investments
Demand/ Clientele	Large companies and SMEs in almost all sectors, except retail	SE enterprises and SMEs demonstrating participatory management and commitment to the environment	Co-operatives or enterprises located in Québec's resource regions
Total Investments	\$4.1 billion in the Québec economy	\$385.4 million in the Québec economy	\$470 million
Impact	126,135 jobs created or maintained	Over 8,000 jobs created or maintained	30,000 jobs
Website	<a href="http://www.fondsftq.com">www.fondsftq.com</a>	<a href="http://www.fondaction.com">www.fondaction.com</a>	<a href="http://www.capitalregional.com">www.capitalregional.com</a>

## 2) Solidarity Finance

Name	<i>Caisse d'économie solidaire</i>	RQCC	RISQ
Objective	Support the development of the social and solidarity-based economy in Quebec	Develop and promote the community credit approach in Quebec while ensuring individual and collective well-being	Provide financing to the social economy in Quebec
Total Assets	XX	\$3.2 million	\$10.3 million
Source of Funding	Labour unions	XX	Government, private investments
Demand/ Clientele	Co-operatives and non-profit organizations	Partner organization (community loans and loan circles)	Social economy enterprises
Total Investments	XX	\$5 million	\$8, 325,867
Impact	XX	2,330 jobs created or maintained	4,412 jobs created or maintained
Website	www.cecosol.coop	www.rqcc.qc.ca	www.fonds-risq.qc.ca

## 2) Solidarity Finance (con't)

Name	<i>FilAction</i>	<i>Fiducie du Chantier de l'économie social</i>
Objective	Meet financing needs of small enterprises and finance community-based funds	Meet the capitalization needs of collective enterprises and give them the support they need for their start-up and expansion projects
Total Assets	\$7 million	\$53.8 million
Source of Funding	<i>FondAction</i>	Government, labour funds
Demand/Clientele	Small enterprises and community-based funds financing the social economy	Social economy enterprises
Total Investments	\$5 million	\$6,447,335
Impact	XX	524 jobs created or maintained
Website	www.filaction.qc.ca	www.fiducieduchantier.qc.ca

### 3) State Finance

Name	FLI	FDEES	<i>Investissement Québec</i>	FIER
Objective	Stimulate local businesses and entrepreneurship at the local level	Promote the emergence of viable projects within social economy enterprises	Promote the growth of investment in Quebec and contribute to economic development and job creation	Finance enterprise start-up and development, as well as support the creation of sector funds
Source of Funding	Government	Government	Government	Government, labour funds, private investments
Demand/ Clientele	Traditional and social economy enterprises	Social economy enterprises	Companies, co-operative businesses and non-profit organizations	Traditional and social economy enterprises
Investments	\$130 million (1998-2002)	\$80 million (2004)	\$642.3 million (2008)	\$90 million
Website	www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca	www.acldq.qc.ca	www.investquebec.com	www.investquebec.com

Source: Notwell, J. (2010).

## APPENDIX B

### **Community Economic Development Guiding Principles**

*Courtesy of Neechi Foods Worker Co-op*

1. USE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS AND SERVICES ♦ purchase of goods and services produced locally ♦ circulation of income within the local community; less income drain ♦ stronger economic linkages within the local community ♦ less dependency on outside markets ♦ greater community self-reliance ♦ restoration of balance in the local economy
2. PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR LOCAL USE ♦ creation of goods and services for use in the local community ♦ circulation of income within the local community; less income drain ♦ stronger economic links within the local community ♦ less dependency on outside markets ♦ greater community self-reliance
3. LOCAL RE-INVESTMENT OF PROFITS ♦ use of profits to expand local economic activity stop profit drain ♦ investment that increases community self-reliance and co-operation
4. LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL RESIDENTS ♦ long-term jobs in areas with chronic unemployment or underemployment ♦ reduced dependency on welfare and food banks ♦ opportunities to live more socially productive lives ♦ personal and community self-esteem ♦ more wages and salaries spent in the local community
5. LOCAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT ♦ training of local residents ♦ training geared to community development ♦ higher labour productivity ♦ greater employability in communities with high unemployment ♦ greater productive capability of economically depressed areas
6. LOCAL DECISION-MAKING ♦ local ownership and control ♦ co-operative ownership and control ♦ grassroots involvement ♦ community self-determination ♦ people working together to meet community needs
7. PUBLIC HEALTH ♦ physical and mental health of community residents ♦ healthier families ♦ more effective schooling ♦ more productive workforce
8. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ♦ healthy, safe, attractive neighbourhoods ♦ ecological sensitivity
9. NEIGHBOURHOOD STABILITY ♦ dependable housing ♦ long-term residency ♦ base for long-term community development



10. HUMAN DIGNITY ♦ self-respect ♦ community spirit ♦ gender equality ♦ respect for seniors and children ♦ Aboriginal pride ♦ social dignity regardless of psychological differences, ethnic background, colour, creed or sexual orientation
11. SUPPORT FOR OTHER CED INITIATIVES ♦ mutually supportive trade among organizations with similar community development goals

Source: [http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet/files/ccednet/pdfs/ced\\_principles.pdf](http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet/files/ccednet/pdfs/ced_principles.pdf)

## APPENDIX C

**2010 Declaration of the National Summit  
for a People-Centred Economy**

**W**E, THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON A PEOPLE-CENTRED ECONOMY, which includes members of the co-operative, social and solidarity economy, social enterprise and community economic development movements, declare our determination and our commitment to building a people centred economy.

Our organizations and networks — local, regional, provincial, national and international — are active participants and leaders in a common project to build sustainable communities that are based on the values of social justice, solidarity, economic fairness, environmental justice, inclusion and democracy.

The continued expansion of a People-Centred Economy is essential to the construction of a more just, equitable and sustainable world. The people centred economy is plural and firmly established in multiple sectors, including and empowering women, Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, youth, persons with disabilities and other community members experiencing inequity and injustice. Our combined efforts have enabled us to improve the lives of countless people, contributing to the support and creation of thousands of jobs, the revitalization of neighbourhoods and communities, and the improvement or formation of new spaces of social inclusion, mobilization and governance. In doing so we reweave the essence of citizenship and contribution.

Today, we invite all people in Canada to join this movement to establish a People-Centred Economy that seeks a more just response to social, economic and environmental imperatives. We invite all people in Canada to recognize the common challenges we must face together in the decades ahead.

The participants of the Summit commit to co operation among our organizations, institutions and networks in the task of scaling up the positive results we are producing and continuing to innovate new solutions to the challenges we face. We commit to ongoing gender and diversity analysis to strengthen equity and equality within our work. We commit to

extending our collaboration to all those movements and sectors that are prepared to work for a sustainable and equitable future.

Related to the specific themes of the National Summit on a People-Centred Economy acknowledge we face multiple and inter related challenges going forward. We can overcome them only if we concentrate our energy on achieving the following actions and encourage women and men in Canada to join us. We want:

**To Increase People-Centred Finance and Investment** by developing gender-responsive regulatory and tax measures to channel new capital into the community sector including tax incentives, demonstration funds and a hybrid legal structure; by building sector capacity through support for intermediaries and innovation funds; and by funding and conducting research and advocacy that includes gender and diversity analysis, documents social and financial impacts, and identifies a sector profile.

**To Develop People-Centred Enterprises** by building stronger networks and collaboration between social enterprises; by developing a greater role for social enterprise in economic revitalization strategies and in all areas of government policy; by building partnerships with governments; and by building public education and public awareness as well as educating and training people to participate and work in the sector

**To Pursue People-Centred Local Revitalization** by promoting the development of policies that create an enabling environment, including long term, flexible financial and other support to local, community based economic development initiatives; by improving access to current and reliable community level data and supporting community capacity for analysis and evaluation; by strengthening citizen engagement, organizational governance and public mobilization; and by strengthening community voice to government

**To Expand People-Centred Purchasing Choices** by building the capacity of social economy suppliers to meet growing opportunities; by pushing for the creation of a public policy environment that supports procurement policy and the practice of purchasing from social economy businesses; by building new and enhancing existing market and sales relationships with private and social sector purchasers; and by developing intermediary services to facilitate access to and increase in markets; by promoting resource sharing systems; and by developing and promoting a social economy “mark.”

**To Build a Stronger Movement for a People-Centred Economy** by making explicit and following key guiding principles to serve as the basis for this movement; by creating a

national roundtable to continue these efforts; by creating space for grassroots participants to be active; through a national communications plan; by building on the national social economy research program, through an ongoing government outreach strategy to support the co construction of public policy; by creating an internal trade mechanism to maximize purchasing between social economy organizations; by convening a dialogue on formal and informal learning, and by promoting the expansion of adapted sector owned models supporting the development of a people centred economy.

**To Foster People-Centred International Solidarity** by respecting principles of participation, gender equality, environmental sustainability, fairness and justice; by denouncing government cuts to aid; by working with international networks to promote and build a social solidarity economy; by advocating for Canada to meet its international commitments; by advocating for CIDA's new priority on economic growth include the social solidarity economy; by supporting efforts for an international solidarity levy, by promoting the importance of people taking charge of their own development; by raising awareness about issues of development; by mobilizing for international trade that is governed by justice and fairness; and by promoting knowledge exchange and the co construction of public policies.

The People-Centred Economy has progressed considerably in Canada in recent years but the gains are still fragile and the challenges substantial. The continued development of a People-Centred Economy cannot proceed without an overall perspective that draws a link between local, national and planetary, between where something is produced and where it is consumed, and between the worker and the socially aware investor. A People-Centred Economy cannot be fully realized without the mobilization of society as a whole.

In concluding this Summit, each of us commits to continue mobilizing for a model of development that leaves nobody aside, so that, more than ever before, solidarity will be at the heart of economic activity throughout Canada and around the world.

Ottawa, June 1, 2010

Source: [http://www.ccednet-cdec.ca/sites/ccednet/files/ccednet/pdfs/Draft\\_declaration\\_E.pdf](http://www.ccednet-cdec.ca/sites/ccednet/files/ccednet/pdfs/Draft_declaration_E.pdf)

## APPENDIX D

**2006 Montréal Declaration Presented at the Conclusion of the Social and Solidarity Economy Summit**

ON THE OCCASION OF the Social and Solidarity Economy Summit, we, actors of the social economy from the community, co-operative and mutual benefit movements and associations, from cultural, environmental and social movements, unions, international co-operation and local and regional development organizations, affirm with pride and determination our commitment to building a social and solidarity economy locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

For decades now, across Québec and even abroad, we have been constructing a social and economic project rooted in the notion that there should be no losers. A project based on values of social justice, fairness, solidarity and democracy.

Today, we are very proud of the results and achievements of **social economy actors and partners**. Our combined efforts, especially during the past decade, have enabled us to create new instruments and reinforce existing ones. This has facilitated the emergence of new sectors and the strengthening of others. Our efforts have also contributed to the support and creation of thousands of jobs, and the improvement or formation of new spaces of social inclusion, mobilization and governance, and in doing so, they have enhanced citizen participation. They have also enabled women to play a leading role in this value-added economy.

And we must not forget that these achievements represent active resistance to the global situation, in which economic growth too often generates poverty and social and geographic inequality. The social economy plays an important role in combating poverty and social exclusion.

Collective enterprises are not alone in their contributions to economic democratization. We are pleased to see the constant rise of responsible investment, the commitment of labour to economic development, public policy that favours sustainable development, responsible consumption practices, and companies that are acting in a socially responsible fashion. Clearly, the social economy is part of broader movement that is constructing alternatives to pervasive neoliberalism, and a **more democratic solidarity-based economy**.

Social economy is essential to the construction of a more just and equitable world. Today the **social and solidarity economy** is plural and firmly established in multiple sectors. Our ranks are growing constantly.

Employment and wealth creation are major concerns when it comes to Quebec's development. We must not forget, though, that human beings produce and consume goods and services and should therefore be central to all economic aims and processes. Bolstered by our success, we see that our society must revise its distribution, production and consumption practices. We must also consider the integration of Québec's economy into the global economy, while pursuing equity and justice at all levels.

Today, we invite women and men in Quebec to join this movement to establish a solidarity-based economy that seeks a more just response to social, economic and environmental imperatives. We encourage Quebeckers to innovate and adopt more responsible consumption practices. **We, the actors and partners of the social and solidarity economy**, are determined to reinforce the social economy's contribution to the sustainable development of Quebec, and, through our partnerships, to sustainable development in others parts of the world.

We also call on decision-makers and our government representatives to transform their methods of measuring economic activity, moving from a simple accounting of financial results to a triple measurement, that accounts for social, environmental as well as financial impacts.

We face huge challenges and little time in which to change the current development model, which is dramatically affecting the environment and deepening the gap between rich and poor, between territories, and between countries.

For these reasons, we affirm our commitment to continue developing the social economy. We also encourage new alliances among the principal sectors of the social and solidarity economy in Canada, across the continent and internationally.

We will face multiple challenges in the next decade. We can overcome them only if we concentrate our energy on achieving the following actions and encourage women and men in Quebec to join us. We want:

**To Do Business in Solidarity**, by acknowledging, maintaining and developing consistency between our organizational missions and the social, economic and environmental

concerns of our enterprises and our movement; by consolidating our networks and encouraging communications within our own networks and with other networks; by supporting marketing and management practices that are consistent with the values we embrace; by being more inclusive of youth, Native peoples, people with disabilities and immigrants; by working with governments to define public policy that recognizes the requirements of democratic management and social and environmental responsibility;

**To Work in Solidarity**, by making a priority of ensuring sustainable and quality employment; first, by improving working conditions for people working in social economy and community action organizations, which means increased funding of these organizations; by organizing a national task force on working conditions; by promoting the recognition, upgrading and qualification of workers; and finally, by expanding our knowledge of the sector and of those who work within it;

**To Invest in Solidarity**, by networking with actors in the areas of capital development and solidarity finance; by consolidating and enhancing the availability of solidarity financial instruments and by working to reform public policy in order to facilitate socially useful investment;

**To Develop Our Territories in Solidarity**, by ensuring that every region in Quebec has fair access to resources for the development of social economy and to financial instruments that meet diverse needs; by supporting regional networks in their efforts to acquire the technical and financial means to achieve their mission; by sensitizing elected representatives to the importance of consolidating resources for the use of enterprises and agencies that support the development of social economy;

**To Consume Responsibly**, by establishing greater synergy among responsible consumption actors; by taking the lead in offering socially and environmentally useful goods and services; by recognizing — among ourselves first of all — the importance of responsible consumption and by fostering this awareness in all socioeconomic actors; by raising public awareness about social economy's contribution to responsible consumption;

**To Act in Global Solidarity**, by mobilizing the public with our partners in the South and North; by holding our governments to their commitments and by increasing our development efforts; by offering resources that enable our partners in the South to partici-

pate on an equal footing and by building continental and intercontinental networks that ensure the full participation of civil society and the social and solidarity economy in developing a global system in which there are no losers.

The social and solidarity economy has progressed considerably in the last ten years in Québec, but the gains are still fragile and the challenges numerous and substantial. Development of the social and solidarity economy cannot proceed without an overall perspective that draws a link between local and planetary, between where something is produced and the act of consumption, and between the worker's contribution and that of the socially aware investor. Development of the social and solidarity economy cannot proceed without the mobilization of society as a whole. In concluding this summit, each of us is committing to continue mobilizing for a model of development that leaves nobody aside, so that, more than ever before, solidarity will be at the heart of economic activity throughout Quebec and around the world.

Montréal, November 17, 2006

Source: <http://www.chantier.qc.ca/userImgs/documents/CLevesque/sitechantierdocuments/declarationsommetang2006.pdf>



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Centre for the Study of Co-operatives  
196 Diefenbaker Building  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5B8  
Phone: (306) 966–8509  
Fax: (306) 966–8517  
Email: [coop.studies@usask.ca](mailto:coop.studies@usask.ca)  
Website: [www.usaskstudies.coop](http://www.usaskstudies.coop)

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