



NEWS RELEASE

CO-OP GUIDE KICKS OFF NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE WEEK

(Guelph ON, October 12, 2008) To kick off national Co-op Week (October 12-18, 2008) the Ontario Co-operative Association is launching its **Fall Guide to Ontario Co-operatives**.

The fall guide takes readers on a virtual tour of the province, and highlights co-ops and credit unions in various regions. 20 organizations, ranging from co-op funeral homes to grocery stores, and from second-hand stores to co-op schools are profiled. The Fall Guide to Ontario Co-operatives is attached in PDF format, and can be downloaded from the On Co-op website www.ontario.coop.

The major provincial co-op event happening during Co-op Week is the **8th annual Co-op Conference and Gala**, held October 15th at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, ON. More than 250 co-op members, staff, boardmembers and co-op sector champions are expected to attend the day-long event, which includes plenary and keynote sessions, workshops and unstructured networking time. Registration is open to anyone interested in, or working in, the co-operative movement.

The crown jewel of the Co-op Conference is the evening's **Co-operative Spirit Recognition Awards banquet and ceremony**. Nine distinguished co-operators including Ontario Minister of Government Services, the Honourable Ted McMeekin, will be recognized for their contributions to the Ontario co-operative movement. Collectively, the Spirit Award recipients reflect many of the primary co-operative sectors in Ontario including housing, child care, agriculture and social services. A summary of Spirit Award recipients is attached, and more information is available at www.ontario.coop/Spirit.

The Conference is hosted by the Ontario Co-operative Association and is sponsored by Ontario co-ops. On Co-op's mission is to lead, cultivate and connect the co-operative sector.

ABOUT CO-OP WEEK:

Co-op Week will be celebrated in Canada from October 12 - 18. Ontario's 1300 co-operatives and credit unions (with 1900 branches in 400 Ontario communities) and Canada's 13 million co-op and credit union members are part of a global movement that is 800 million members strong. International credit union day will be celebrated Thursday October 16. Many individual co-operatives and credit unions will be hosting events in their branches all week long.

In the face of globalization, concentration of ownership, and advancing technology, co-operatives and credit unions have two significant advantages over their investor-owned competitors. First, unlike the private, public or voluntary sectors, they are guided by internationally shared values and principles designed to ensure fairness and equity. And

second, they are controlled by their members - members who can say of their co-op or credit union: It Belongs to Me!

National Co-op Week is always a busy time in the co-operative sector. It is a time to celebrate and promote the role, accomplishments and contributions of our co-ops and credit unions. Co-op week events help raise the visibility of the co-op business model, and improve understanding and awareness of co-operatives.

For more information on Ontario's co-operatives and credit unions, contact Mark Ventry, Membership and Communications Manager, Ontario Co-operative Association mventry@ontario.coop 1.888.745.5521.

Information on the Co-op Conference and Gala may be found at www.ontario.coop/Gala. Contact local co-ops directly for specific information on their co-op week/credit union day activities. To find the co-ops in your region, visit the online co-op search directory www.coopsontario.com.

The Ontario Co-operative Association develops, unites and promotes co-operatives throughout the province of Ontario. The Association's mission is to lead cultivate and connect the co-operative sector.

For additional information about Ontario's diverse co-operative sector: Mark Ventry, Membership and Communications Manager, Ontario Co-operative Association, Guelph Ontario. 1.888.745.5521 ext 30 mventry@ontario.coop. www.ontario.coop or www.coopsontario.com

ONTARIO'S CO-OPERATIVES – QUICK FACTS

1300 co-operatives, credit unions & caisses populaires; **1900** locations in **400** communities; **\$30 billion** in assets; **16,500** employees; **1.4 million** members; governed by **10,000** volunteer board members.

Provincial breakdown: **50%** of all co-ops are located in central Ontario; **25%** in south-western Ontario; **15%** in eastern Ontario; and **10%** in northern Ontario.

Sector breakdown: **6%** of all co-ops are involved in Agriculture; **17%** are involved in Child Care; **17%** are involved in Financial Services; and **45%** are involved in Housing. Co-ops in all other sectors comprise the remaining **15%**.