



**For immediate release**

## **UN General Assembly proclaims 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives**

**Ottawa, December 18, 2009** -- Ottawa, December 18, 2009 - Canada's co-operative sector is celebrating today's decision by the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives.

The proclamation of the International Year was included in a resolution entitled "Co-operatives in Social Development", which was adopted by the General Assembly at today's session in New York. The full text of the resolution can be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/InternationalYear>.

Since 1959, the UN has designated International Years in order to draw attention to major issues and to encourage international action to address concerns which have global importance.

"At a time when so many people around the world have a heightened interest in doing business with organizations whose values reflect their own, raising awareness of co-operatives and what they stand for is very important," said Kathy Bardswick, president and CEO of The Co-operators, who was recently elected to represent Canada on the board of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA).

"The International Year of Co-operatives is an opportunity for people everywhere to learn more about this diverse group of organizations that contribute so much to economies and communities in virtually every corner of the world."

On December 3, the federal government announced its support for the UN resolution, the first time a Canadian government has officially expressed its support for a UN International Year before it was proclaimed. "Our government fully recognizes the importance of co-operatives and their contribution to Canadian society," said the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), at a news conference in Ottawa.

Carol Hunter, executive director of the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), said Canadian co-operative leaders, together with partner organizations in Canada and around the world, will be working on a program of International Year activities aimed at highlighting the social and economic contributions of co-operatives, including credit unions.

"Co-operatives and credit unions in Canada have more than 17 million members, but most Canadians are unaware of their social and economic impact on this country as a whole and on rural and urban communities across Canada," she said. "The International Year will provide us with ample opportunities to generate awareness of that contribution, and to encourage people to organize themselves into co-operatives to address their own economic and social needs."

### **Co-ops in Canada...and the world**

- There are close to 9,000 co-ops and credit unions across Canada, with more than 17 million members.

- Some of Canada's best-known businesses, including Mountain Equipment Co-op, Federated Co-operatives Limited, UFA Co-operative Limited, Co-op Atlantic, Gay Lea Foods, The Co-operators (insurance), Vancity (credit union), Agropur and Desjardins Group are co-operatives.
- The co-operative sector controls over \$275 billion in assets.
- The world's 300 largest co-operatives, nine of which are Canadian, have an aggregate turnover of \$US 1.1 trillion, the size of the 10th largest economy in the world.
- According to the International Labour Organization, co-operatives provide more than 100 million jobs, more than all the world's multinational corporations combined.

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*The Canadian Co-operative Association is a national association for co-operatives in Canada, representing more than nine million co-operative and credit union members from over 2,000 organizations. CCA members come from many sectors of the economy, including finance, insurance, agri-food and supply, wholesale and retail, housing, health and the service sector. CCA provides leadership to promote, develop, and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world. CCA is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2009.*

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