



The Co-operators gains special recognition in honor of its outreach during Year of Co-ops

Guelph, ON, Nov. 29, 2012 -- The gift of Co-operators Group Limited to this year's International Year of Co-operatives has been to provide many communities and individuals the means to celebrate and develop co-op projects.

The Canadian-owned insurance and financial services group (cooperators.ca) will be recognized for its generosity and leadership at the Ontario Co-operative Association (On Co-op) IYC Gala at the Milton, Ont. Teatro Conference & Event Centre on Friday. More than 110 individuals and organizations have received the award since 1999, but The Co-operators will receive one of four trophies awarded only this year.

Among the many projects led by The Co-operators was The National Co-op Challenge that has just closed, distributing nearly a quarter million dollars to emerging or expanding Canadian co-operatives. Applicants created videos to persuade Canadians to vote for their projects. Last week, it was announced that The Co-operators is one of three organizations pledging to support a new Co-operative Investment Fund providing Canadian co-operatives access to capital for their expansion and development. Earlier, The Co-operators donated \$500,000 to each of the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada's Build a Better World campaign and the Global Development Co-operative.

The Co-operators also promoted the year in its routine and special communication and events, and assisted local businesses to do the same. It estimates that its social media messages reached millions. Additionally, it took a principal role in Ontario to launch 2012 as a year commemorating the contributions of co-operatives and credit unions worldwide and has voiced its strong support for the sector in the media, including helping sponsor a supplement in the Globe and Mail on The Power of Co-operatives.

The Co-operators fosters, "a greater understanding of co-operative values in the public psyche by supporting local IYC initiatives," says Cathy Crawley of Ag Energy Co-operative and a member of the Guelph Co-operative Network.

Receiving the award on behalf of The Co-operators is Retail Co-op Experience Project Manager Mary Lou Schaefer who has acted as project manager for many IYC initiatives over the past year. She will be joined on the awards stage by three other honourees.

The International Co-operative Alliance estimates that co-operatives have more than a billion members ([2012.coop](#)) and the livelihoods of about three billion people are made more secure by co-operative enterprises.

The Ontario co-operative movement itself is comprised of more than 1300 co-ops, with 1900 locations in 400 communities. Ontario co-operatives employ more than 15,500 people and are supported by a network of 49,000 volunteers.

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On Co-op's mission is to lead, cultivate and connect the Ontario co-operative movement. The association is a co-operative created as a resource and common voice for Ontario credit unions and co-operatives ten years ago. Visit www.ontario.coop to learn more.

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