



OCA Board Member Profile



Sally Miller, Treasurer

Representing the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation on the Board of OCA

Tell us a bit about yourself (i.e., your background (where you grew up, education, children, which co-operative you work for, your position, etc.)

I am the Project Manager for the Local Food and Farm Co-ops. I worked in sustainable food and agriculture and co-ops for over twenty-five years, including the Ontario Natural Food Co-op, Organic Meadow, Fourth Pig Worker Co-op, West End Food Co-op in Canada, and Finger Lakes Organic Growers' Co-op in the U.S. I am also currently the Project Manager for the innovative Fair Finance Fund, providing affordable capital for social enterprises in the local food and farm sector. I have positions on various Boards, including the Treasurer of the Fourth Pig Worker Co-operative and the Treasurer of the Ontario Co-operative Association. Publications include *Edible Action: Food Activism and Alternative Economics* (Fernwood 2008); and *Belongings: The Fight for Land and Food* (Fernwood 2016) and numerous research reports. I also have a PhD in Anthropology (Cornell University) and a Masters in Environmental Studies from York University.

How long have you been involved in the co-operative movement, and what do you love most about it?

I started with co-ops when I finished my PhD and wanted another career path instead of academics. I found my way to a Manager position for the Finger Lakes Organic Growers' Co-op in New York State and never looked back. I was inspired then and continue to be inspired by the dedication of other co-operators to democratic governance. In those pre-video conference days, directors drove as much as three hours to drop their product at the warehouse and attend Board meetings.

If there is one thing you would want people to know about co-ops, what would it be?

Co-ops are one of the strongest and most ethical forms of business; for new businesses, using the co-op model can ensure longevity and a pool of talent to help you through tough times.

Why is your co-operative a member of OCA?

I represent the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation on the OCA Board (through my position on the Fourth Pig Worker Co-op Board). The CWCF is committed to supporting regional federations of co-ops as part of their mandate. The Fourth Pig Worker Co-op is a non-profit natural building co-op in Ontario; as a member of CWCF, we are committed to Co-op Principal 6, supporting other co-ops.

What do you think are some of the benefits of being a member of OCA?

Members of OCA have had a voice and input into important changes in the co-op regulations, bringing the Co-op Act up to date as well as getting the word out about the co-op model. OCA also offers important training and networking opportunities for Ontario's co-ops.

Why did you decide to join the OCA board as a Director?

I have appreciated the work of OCA for years, connecting with OCA on various initiatives through my position as Manager at the Local Food and Farm Co-ops. When I was invited, I was delighted to have a chance to contribute to OCA's work.

How has your past experience helped you in this role?

I have been on several other Boards and acted as co-op developer for co-ops in food, agriculture, renewable energy and construction. Through the Local Food and Farm Co-ops, I am part of an organization providing support for governance, business development, marketing, financing and other topics to co-ops and collaboratives in the local food and farm sector.

What do you think are some of the opportunities and challenges facing OCA in the next 3 - 5 years?

We need to continue to get the word out through a diversity of communication channels about the importance of co-ops to a strong national economy. As business and farm owners reach retirement, there is a transition to new owners, often these established businesses do not directly transition to the owners' children. The co-op model has an important role to play in offering a strong succession solution to these businesses as they evolve.

What is your vision for OCA?

To continue to build capacity to reach more people, inspire more communities to support co-ops, and to continue to excel at our government relations work.

Share a fun/silly thing that not many people know about you!

I can write backwards in mirror writing.