



Tell us a bit about your co-operative – its origins, purpose and what needs/value your organization provides to the community.

Incorporated in 1992, the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation (CWCF) arose from a meeting of members of Canada’s worker co-op sector in 1990, which concluded there was a need for a national organization to represent their interests. Our vision was “to be a growing, cohesive network of democratically controlled worker co-ops that provide a high quality of work life, and support the development of healthy, just and sustainable local economies, based on co-operative values and principles.”

Today, CWCF fulfills this vision as a national, bilingual grassroots membership organization of and for worker co-operatives, related types of co-operatives (multi-stakeholder co-ops with substantial worker control), and organizations that support the growth and development of worker co-operatives. Our mission is:

To work in solidarity with our members to achieve our Vision of a Co-operative Economy;

To support the development of new worker co-ops;

To strengthen the Federation, to animate the worker co-operative movement; and

To represent and promote the Canadian worker co-op movement in Canada and internationally.

CWCF supports its members through initiatives such as our monthly newsletter, annual conference, lobbying for worker co-op interests, technical assistance program, RRSP program, and more. More information about CWCF is available on [our website](#).

How is your co-operative responding to the current needs of the community?

CWCF adopted a series of policies in response to the outbreak of the pandemic, including the introduction of \$10 solidarity dues, creation of the Survival Planning Fund to provide small grants to members facing challenges arising from the pandemic, and the creation of an emergency loan fund. Our plan pre-pandemic was to conduct more frequent in-person visits, but in the meantime we’ll be conducting telephone conversations with our members to see

how they're doing, whether and if so how these member supports have helped them, and what other supports we might be able to provide.

What is your vision for co-operatives in rebuilding the economy post-pandemic?

We believe worker co-operatives have a critical role to play in creating a more just and equitable economy post-pandemic, one that will help address issues such as precarious employment, climate change, and systemic racism. We hope to strengthen Canada's existing worker co-ops not only for its own sake but also in the belief that the more visible and influential our members are, the more people will be inspired to purchase from and/or create their own worker co-ops. Some of our members in Ontario include: [Arise Architects Co-op](#), [Come As You Are](#), [Developmental Services Worker \(DSW\) Co-op](#) in Ottawa, the [Fourth Pig Green and Natural Construction](#), [Hypha Co-op](#) (IT), [La Siembra](#) (Camino, fair trade, organic products), [Libra Information Services](#), [London Brewing Co-op](#), [Moss Digital](#), [Planet Bean Coffee](#) in Guelph, [SendIt Courier](#) in Toronto, and [Urbane Cyclist](#). To get to know some of the worker co-ops in Ontario (and beyond), we encourage people to check out our member profiles available [here](#), as well as our [solidarity shopping site](#).

What does the future of the co-operative sector in Ontario look like to you?

Because we are a national organization, our perspective is national and not limited solely to Ontario. However, we believe that worker co-operatives can play a significant role in the post-pandemic economic recovery by demonstrating co-op values such as concern for community. One of the ways we hope to address both a pressing community concern and create more worker co-ops is through business succession, an issue of great importance given the large number of small business owners likely to retire in the coming years. Support for this initiative is a key part of our current proposal to the federal government, "Building Community Resilience".

Our Strategic Plan also calls on us to work more closely with our allies in the social and solidarity economy to advance our common interests, in accordance with the values of co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community.

What aspect of OCA's mission/strategic programs do you think is most important as a way to rebuild a more co-operative economy?

CWCF shares OCA's focus on government relations as a way to improve the regulatory and legislative framework for our members. OCA's recent budget submission to the ministry of finance has parallels with objectives in our strategic plan, such as its proposals for a strategy to address precarious employment and business succession. We are also interested in your

initiatives to make the co-op model more widely known and facilitate co-op starts up, something we pursue ourselves through technical assistance program, and soon through our Parcours training and development program.

Anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for giving CWCF the opportunity to be profiled!