



Highlights from the 2019 Co-operative Queen's Park Reception

On April 30, over 100 co-operators and 32 MPPs (including 3 Ministers and several government staffers) attended the Co-operative Queen's Park Reception, which highlighted not only the incredible diversity of the sector in Ontario, but the growing awareness and support we are gaining from the Province.

The evening was organized and hosted by OCA in partnership with the Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario (CCO), who have been working closely together for a number of years to create a more favourable legislative environment for Ontario's co-operatives to grow and thrive.

This year's event was a tremendous success – apparent not only in the sheer numbers of people that attended, but in the positive energy that filled the room. The sector was celebrating the provincial government's commitment to review the feedback from co-operatives received through the recent consultation process, and work with our sector to propose amendments to the legislation. Also being commemorated was moving the incorporation of co-operatives from (the now defunct) Financial Services Commission of Ontario, to the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services.

OCA has been advocating for changes to the Ontario *Co-operative Corporations Act* for over fifteen years. In her speech thanking all those who have helped move this process forward, Executive Director Erin Morgan recognized the significant contribution of OCA's former ED Denyse Guy (also in attendance), in raising the profile of co-operatives and the legislative challenges they face, to the Province.

The current MPP Co-op Caucus Co-Chairs were introduced by our two Platinum Sponsors (Wendy Carruthers, The Co-operators and Simone Swail, CHF Canada, Ontario Region). All three Co-Chairs, Randy Pettapiece (Conservative MPP, Perth-Wellington), Chris Glover (NDP MPP, Spadina-Fort York), and Nathalie De Rosiers (Liberal MPP, Ottawa-Vanier), spoke eloquently about their support of co-operatives, and the significant contributions they make to the province's social economy.

Glover, the newest Co-Chair to join the Caucus, spoke passionately about his long-term involvement and interest in co-operatives, having once lived in a housing co-op and also studied under Professor Jack Quarter at OISE, University of Toronto. He attributed Quarter, who passed away on February 7, 2019, for igniting his interest in co-operatives and the social economy many years ago.

Each of the three current Co-Chairs and three past Co-Chairs were gifted an Inuit sculpture, donated in part by Arctic Co-operative, as a special thank you for their dedication and work in helping raise awareness of co-operatives within the Province, and for their efforts to help remove the legislative barriers that are preventing Ontario's co-operatives from developing and prospering.

Throughout the evening, we showcased a number of delicious products produced by co-operatives, including cheese from St. Albert Cheese Co-op and Gay Lea Foods Co-operative (who also donated milk

and cream), chocolate from La Siembra Co-operative, cookies from Common Ground Co-operative, and craft beer from both London Brewing and Together We're Bitter Brewing Co-operative. We are very grateful to all these organizations for their generous donations!

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all twelve organizations that generously sponsored this event, and helped make it possible, including: The Co-operators; Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Ontario Region; GROWMARK, Inc.; Meridian Credit Union; Lerner's LLP; Ag Energy Co-operative; Libro Credit Union; Desjardins; Iler Campbell LLP; Your Credit Union; Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario; and Caisse Populaire Alliance.

Last but certainly not least, we are very grateful to all the co-operative leaders and stakeholders from the Ontario movement that took their time to battle the traffic and rallies at Queen's Park, to attend the Reception. Together, we stand strong and in co-operation we will meet our goals for a more even playing field for co-operatives to grow and succeed in Ontario.