

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



## **Social co-operatives emerging as innovative solution providers to province's care needs**

**GUELPH ON, July 27, 2018** – Social co-operatives are emerging as the solution to a growing community need for social services like elder care, mental health services and support for the disabled, when 15% of Ontarians have a mental or physical disability and only 50% are able to find employment.

In many communities, social co-operatives are also helping transition their clients into active and engaged members of their communities. TeamWerks Co-operative is one such example. Located in the Victoriaville Mall in Thunder Bay, ON, they recently transitioned from an institutional setting at the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital to a new community-based outpatient mental health and addictions program centre.

“TeamWerks Co-op is a key component of the St. Joseph’s Care Group, providing consumers of mental health services with a range of employment, education volunteer opportunities and peer to peer support networks,” notes Doug Dowhos, Supervisor for St. Joseph’s Care Group’s employment options program.

The co-op is similar to other co-operative organizations in that it operates on a triple bottom line approach that puts equal value on social, economic and environmental goals and outcomes. It is unique in that it operates a collection of eight different businesses units that allow clients and members to participate in a wide variety of employment and training areas, providing them with the skills they need to secure employment in their communities.

Adds Dowhos: “Our unique structure enables TeamWerks to match clients with a business that best suits their interests and abilities, rather than pegging them into one business type common among more traditional social enterprises.”

A great example of the social, economic and environmental objectives that drive the co-operative and how it benefits the community can be found in their innovative business unit, GreenWerks Garden. It not only provides employment and training to members of the co-op, it also makes a positive impact on the environment by providing over 2000 lbs. of organic, local produce on institutional lands used by the St. Joseph’s Care Group Food Services division and the Regional Food Distribution Association supporting food banks throughout North Western Ontario.

“Through TeamWerks Co-op, clients gain skills by participating in the business operations which boosts their confidence, with the goal of moving on and working in their community - or to become a member

and work in one of the other TeamWerks businesses. As a result, the client's quality of life improves significantly, which is a very positive outcome for them, the community and the province as a whole," says Dowhos.

Other examples of social co-operatives providing innovative care solutions in Ontario, include Y's Owl Maclure Co-operative Centre in Ottawa, Yes We Can Kingston Co-op, and Common Ground Co-operative in Toronto.

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Learn more about TeamWerks Co-operative online at <http://teamwerks.ca>

#### **ABOUT THE ONTARIO CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION (OCA)**

Co-operatives are a different kind of business model that are driven by people, planet and profit. OCA supports, develops, educates and advocates for Ontario's 1,500+ co-operative businesses. We exist to strengthen and unite the co-operative movement and we believe that co-operatives are the solution to creating stronger communities, which help to build a better world.

To learn more, visit [ontario.coop](http://ontario.coop), [facebook.com/ONcooperatives](https://www.facebook.com/ONcooperatives), [twitter.com/ONcooperatives](https://twitter.com/ONcooperatives), or contact Erin Morgan, Executive Director at 519.763.8271 x 30 or at [emorgan@ontario.coop](mailto:emorgan@ontario.coop).