

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Co-operatives and sustainability at forefront of On Co-op's provincial conference agenda**

**Guelph ON. September 20, 2017.** On September 28, delegates representing co-operatives and credit unions from across the province will gather in downtown Toronto to discuss the potential for creating more sustainable organizations, and for contributing to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The Ontario Co-operative Association (On Co-op) decided to make "People, Planet and Prosperity: Co-operatives and Sustainability" the central theme for this year's [conference](#), as it encompasses all the facets of what they as an organization strive to protect and nurture for their members and for the greater Ontario co-operative system.

*"Our main objective with this year's provincial gathering is to provide co-operative leaders, board directors, staff and their members with the tools and inspiration to help strengthen their organizations, as well as opportunities for creating connections and collaborations within the sector that will go well beyond the one-day conference,"* notes On Co-op's Acting Executive Director, Peter Cameron.

The conference will begin by considering real-life examples of co-operative sustainable development within a variety of business sectors, and the differences that these co-operatives are making within their communities. [Gay Lea Foods Co-operative](#) President and CEO, Michael Barrett, will open the day with a keynote address, sharing how his organization has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable co-operative development by living the co-operative difference and values.

The afternoon will focus on *how* stronger and more sustainable co-operative organizations can be developed by examining three key areas: how we can educate and mobilize our members to become "Co-op Ambassadors"; how we can get millennials excited and engaged in co-operatives; and how we can advocate for co-operatives to help raise awareness within government.

*"This year, we have integrated a variety of sessions that include formal presentations, moderated panel discussions and interactive breakout sessions to keep our participants informed and engaged. Our guest [speakers and moderators](#) represent a wide variety of co-operative businesses and sectors, offering delegates a range of insight and perspective on the greater Ontario co-operative movement,"* adds Audrey Aczel, On Co-op's Communications and Event Manager.

Attendees have also been invited to take part in other activities taking place throughout the day, including On Co-op's [Annual General Meeting](#), the 17<sup>th</sup> [Co-operative Spirit Awards](#) - where one organization and two individuals will be recognized for their incredible contributions to the Ontario co-operative movement - as well as the Banquet Dinner and Fundraiser, hosted by the [Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada](#) in partnership with On Co-op.



On Co-op would like to recognize the following organizations for their generous support of this year's Provincial Conference:

**PLATINUM SPONSORS:** The Co-operators and FirstOntario Credit Union

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#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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The Ontario Co-operative Association exists to strengthen and unite the co-operative movement in Ontario. We believe that co-operatives are the solution to creating stronger communities, which help to build a better world.

Our Members are organizations that believe in the co-operative principles and are invested in the future of the movement. With their commitment, we are able to deliver co-operative research, education, advocacy, networks, tools and resources, that support the success and sustainability of all co-operatives and the movement as a whole.

On Co-op is an information and resources network with a mission to *lead, cultivate and connect co-operatives*. Visit [www.ontario.coop](http://www.ontario.coop). [facebook.com/oncoop](https://facebook.com/oncoop). [twitter.com/ontariocoops](https://twitter.com/ontariocoops).