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### **Co-operative Approach Foundation of Brewing Co-operative's Success**

**GUELPH ON, January 29, 2019** – Collaboration, co-operation and creative innovation are the keys to success for Kitchener's Together We're Bitter Co-operative Brewing (TWB) celebrating three years in business this month.

Their idea began as a strong desire to do business differently. This led the small group of craft beer enthusiasts to the co-operative model and a now thriving business.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," says Alex Szaflarska, a worker-owner of TWB who also coordinates their community outreach and events. "We saw an underserved market for craft beer in our region and wanted to help revitalize the community, while using a more democratic and ethical business model."

The co-operative's six worker-owners (employees who invest in and own the business), founded and incorporated TWB in 2013. They did everything themselves, each contributing unique skillsets and expertise to the project. Not only did this save them money, but also contributed to a great sense of "pride of ownership" that they have maintained.

"We were on a shoe-string budget, so the highly collaborative approach was key to our development," notes Szaflarska.

The community-based co-operative approach also opened the door to an innovative means of funding the business. Seventeen "community supporters" each invested \$5,000 and in return, they receive dividends and many other perks, including invitations to the Annual General Meetings.

The impact has been significant. "These investors have also become our 'community ambassadors'," adds Szaflarska. "They're out there promoting and marketing our business, while we can focus on its operations and our community outreach."

TWB was the first craft brewery to open in Kitchener in 2016, and has grown into a vibrant community hub for craft beer enthusiasts from all walks of life. Four others have since opened in the region, keeping in line with the industry's considerable growth since 2002.

“What makes us unique is not just in the offering of diverse style of beer, but our co-operative foundation,” says Szaflarska. “We began and are growing in a slow but self-sustaining way. We have both employees and community supporters that own the business and have a say in it. And we employ the triple bottom line approach [of people, planet and profit] to doing business through the social and economic support we provide to the community, while taking measures to reduce our environmental footprint internally where we can.”

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#### **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://facebook.com/ONcooperatives), [twitter.com/ONcooperatives](https://twitter.com/ONcooperatives), or contact peter Cameron, Acting Executive Director at 519.763.8271 x 23 or at [pcameron@ontario.coop](mailto:pcameron@ontario.coop).

#### **ABOUT TOGETHER WE’RE BITTER**

Learn more about Together We’re Bitter by visiting them online at [www.brewing.coop](http://www.brewing.coop). Or better yet, drop in for a beer!

(500 words)