



*Strengthening Canada's Communities / Des communautés plus fortes au Canada*

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Inky Mark  
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Inky Mark,

On behalf of the Manitoba Community Economic Development Network, I am writing to encourage you to support the renewal and expansion of the Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI). This excellent federal program has worked to promote and develop new and emerging co-ops that create jobs that make Manitoba's economy strong and diverse.

The Manitoba Community Economic Development Network supports the work of community organizations that are creating economic opportunities and enhancing social conditions in our province. We bring these groups together to share expertise, mobilize communities, and build a focus on Community Economic Development (CED). Our membership is made up of community groups, foundations, practitioners *and co-ops*. The Manitoba CED Network proudly counts many of the co-ops whom CDI has supported among our members and considers co-ops to be an important part of building stronger communities and fairer economies in our province.

Canada has a large and diverse co-operative sector. There are approximately 8,800 co-ops across the country with over 17 million memberships, more than \$255 billion in assets, employing 150,000 people and led by over 100,000 volunteer Board and committee members. The CDI has been funded by the department of Agriculture and Agri-Food for six years through the Co-operatives Secretariat. Together, these programs have helped create some 200 new co-operatives, including more than 55 right here in Manitoba, and aided more than 1,500 other co-operatives across the country.

The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) and the Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité (CCCM) are now proposing a new and enhanced CDI which would combine the most effective components of these two programs and provide a further opportunity for the federal government to invest in the economic well-being of Canadian communities.

The CCA and the CCCM would jointly administer the entire program, assuming responsibilities that were previously managed by government. The new and expanded CDI would have more funding for Advisory Services (such as technical advice on how to set up new co-ops), early stage project assistance, a new co-operative loan fund as well as continuing the value-added agricultural co-op program. The program would run for four years starting April 1, 2009.

At a time when many Canadians and the communities they live in are struggling with the effects of the

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global economic crisis, investment in new and emerging co-operatives is a low-cost and effective means to create jobs, set up new locally-owned businesses and revitalize our economy. The federal government can help make this happen by renewing and enhancing this proven federal program which has produced concrete results.

If you have any questions on the CDI proposal, please contact John Anderson, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy at the Canadian Co-operative Association, (613) 237-6711, ext. 228 or [john.anderson@coopscanada.coop](mailto:john.anderson@coopscanada.coop)

Sincerely,



Brendan Reimer  
Manitoba CED Network – Regional Coordinator