

Quebec Declaration

In the lead-up to the [UN International Year of Co-operatives 2012](#), and on the occasion of the first [North American Worker Co-operative Conference](#) (Quebec City, October 13-15, 2011), the Worker Co-op Federations in North America have come together to create CICOPA-North America¹ and have drafted this joint Declaration on the socio-economic future of our communities and on public policy concerning co-operatives.

Who We Are, What We Believe, and the World We Want to Build

Worker co-operatives² are enterprises that are owned and controlled by their workers. Their purpose is to provide their member-owners with a work environment which facilitates their professional and human development, and provides the best wages and benefits possible within the capacity of their businesses. Worker co-ops are run democratically on the principle of one person - one vote.

Worker co-operatives around the world embrace and accept the seven [Co-operative Principles](#) recognized by the International Co-operative Alliance and the Co-operative Values: self-help, democracy, equality, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members embrace the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Together, members of worker co-operatives work for the establishment of a new mode of socio-economic development with a human face, in which economic, social and cultural needs of human beings will always have priority over the requirements of capital. We envision a co-operative economy whose goal is to serve the needs of the people who build it rather than the capital that finances it. Together, members work for the establishment of a new mode of sustainable socio-economic development that is just for all, and compatible with the ecological sustainability of our planet.

Our co-operative federations have the mission to help worker co-operatives build a new world with a just and caring human face. The five worker co-op federations in North America signing this Declaration pledge to do everything possible, in accordance with our values, to accomplish this mission,

- by facilitating the creation of new worker co-operatives,
- by facilitating the harmonious development of our co-operative members,
- by partnering with all organizations sharing this vision and the will to act for the emergence of this new mode of equitable, sustainable socio-economic development, and
- by urging governments to use the worker co-operative model to contribute to this better future.

¹ [CICOPA](#) is the international organization of worker co-operatives, affiliated with the International Co-operative Alliance. CICOPA-Americas is its regional organization in the Americas, and CICOPA-North America, covering worker co-ops in Quebec, the rest of Canada and the United States, is the sub-regional entity.

² Throughout this declaration, when we say "worker co-operatives" we include industrial, artisan, service, worker and social cooperatives, in keeping with international conventions.

The Six Components of Coherent and Effective Public Policy to Encourage the Creation and Development of Worker Co-operatives

In order to urge governments to help create this better future, we call for coherent and effective public policy favouring the creation and development of this new model of socio-economic development, with the following six components.

- 1) Recognition: Recognize the relevance of and provide for the eligibility of worker co-operatives in government programs and policies in all ministries and government agencies.
- 2) Development: Facilitate the creation and development of worker co-operatives by working in partnership with their federations, notably by helping them to fulfill their mission of promoting worker co-operation, education for economic democracy and technical assistance in the creation and development of worker co-operatives.
- 3) Capitalization: Facilitate the capitalization and financing of worker co-operatives by the establishment of dedicated co-operative development funds in partnership with the co-operative movement, as well as by favourable tax policies.
- 4) Legislation: Adopt a specific law governing the operation of worker co-operatives, or specific provisions on worker co-operatives in the case of a broader law on co-operatives, which in either case should include provisions on indivisible reserves.
- 5) Conversions: Propose the co-operative solution as an alternative to the risk of the imminent closure of thousands of companies following the retirement of their owners from the baby boomer generation and the lack of potential buyers expected; set up programs to help the succession of these companies to their employees through one or other of the various legal forms of co-operatives controlled by their employees.
- 6) Government Procurement: Strengthen the network of worker co-operatives by giving priority in purchasing their goods and services.

Signed by:

[Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation](#)

[United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives](#)

[Le RÉSEAU de la coopération du travail du Québec](#)

[La Fédération québécoise des coopératives forestières](#)

[La Fédération des Coopératives des Paramédics du Québec](#)