



For immediate release

\$1 million SSHRC grant awarded for research on co-operatives

Ottawa, February 4, 2010 – Canada’s co-operative sector, in partnership with four Canadian universities, has been awarded funding of \$1 million over five years to conduct research on the social, economic and environmental impact of co-operatives.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council announced today that the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA)’s application to create a Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) has been successful.

SSHRC’s CURA program supports the creation of alliances between community organizations and post-secondary institutions to foster innovative research, training and the creation of new knowledge in areas of importance for Canada’s social, cultural or economic development.

John Anderson, CCA’s Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy and the lead co-op sector researcher on the CURA project, said Canada’s co-operative sector plays a significant role in helping Canadian communities meet social, economic and environmental challenges, but that the extent of that role has not been quantified.

“Members of the co-operative sector know that these enterprises have far-reaching impacts for their members and communities they serve, yet the true value of co-operative enterprise is not well understood,” he said. “The research that will be conducted through the CURA aims to examine the full impact of co-operatives on Canada’s social, economic and environmental fabric, and demonstrate their value to Canadian communities.”

CCA applied for the CURA in partnership with Saint Mary’s University, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Victoria, and Mount Saint Vincent University, all of which are well-known for their research on co-operatives and the social economy. More than a dozen other co-operative associations, co-ops, credit unions and academic researchers will also participate in the CURA.

Dr. Sonja Novkovic, professor of economics at Saint Mary’s University and the lead academic researcher for the project, said the CURA’s research team will create a network of national and regional research clusters that will develop measurement tools and study topics such as the nature of the “co-operative difference” as it relates to social responsibility and accountability, the impact of member and employee participation on a co-operative’s performance and the role of credit unions in building wealth. Additional topics will examine infrastructure support for co-operative development, how to replicate co-operative innovation and co-operative responses to market failures.

The SSHRC funding will amount to \$200,000 a year in each of the five years starting in April, 2010. The CURA will be managed by CCA in consultation with its partners and participants.

“We are very pleased that SSHRC recognized the value that this research will have, not only for the co-op sector but for all Canadians seeking a greater understanding of economic, social and environmental issues,” Mr. Anderson said. “We look forward to working with our partners over the next five years on expanding, enhancing and promoting the body of research that is available on this important subject. The fact that 2012 has been proclaimed the International Year of Co-operatives by the United Nations makes this a particularly opportune time to carry out this initiative.”

For more information about the CURA, go to www.coopscanada.coop/en/info_resources/CURA.

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The Canadian Co-operative Association is a national association for co-operatives in Canada, representing more than nine million co-operative and credit union members from over 2,000 organizations. CCA members come from many sectors of the economy, including finance, insurance, agri-food and supply, wholesale and retail, housing, health and the service sector. CCA provides leadership to promote, develop, and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world.