

Research Overview

- Literature review and policy scan
- Interviews with 12 representatives from the co-op sector (representing roughly 20 co-ops) and 2 government interviews

Questions:

- How do government policies/programs and co-ops affect each other in NB?
- What existing policies and programs address New Brunswick co-operatives?
- How does support for co-ops compare to support for other organizations?

“There is an argument to be made that you would see more co-operative and/or stronger co-operatives if government played a greater role and advertised to start up a rural co-op the same way you often see entrepreneurship promoted. In small communities if there is not a product or a service available - that is prime material for the beginning of a co-op.” – Government interview, Fredericton August 20, 2008

New Brunswick Co-ops

- Over 200 co-ops
- 4200 jobs offered by co-ops
- Annual sales/revenues of \$412 million
- Various types of co-ops: from renewable energy to film to farmers
- Provincial legislation last addressed in 1978
- 2 provincial cross co-op councils: Co-operative de developpement regional-Acadie ltee. and the Co-operative Enterprise Council

“In New Brunswick, co-ops are legislated under Justice. So if I come to the government of New Brunswick and say that I want to open a co-op and I think we can hire 20 people - they say ‘well send in your forms and your money, thank you very much.’ [Then we ask if they] have somebody they can send out to help us and [they say] ‘no, oh no’. I go do the same thing in Nova Scotia and go to Economic Development and [they] say, ‘wow, 20 new jobs! This would be a good thing. How can I help you?’ So I see it as an issue of [where] co-ops are [handled]”.-Co-op Sector Interview, Moncton Area May 27, 2008

Policy and Co-ops in New Brunswick: Making the Pitch

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“If [Premier Graham] wants this province to become self-sufficient, that means all of the province will become self sufficient—not just Moncton, Fredericton and Saint John — it is also Caraquet and St-Paul and Miramichi. If these places want to be self-sufficient they will have to look at economic development and because of the values and the local governance, co-operatives are a very interesting solution. But co-ops are not known to the leaders right now who are making decisions on economic development, so it's a fundamental problem.” –Co-op Sector Interview, Kent County May 27, 2008

Findings: Interviews and Policy Scan

- Co-operative Associations Act is outdated
- Few programs that offer support for enterprise development are co-op friendly
- More success accessing government development and funding programs at the federal level
- Department of Justice housing co-ops is not development-focused
- Much support between co-operatives
- Co-ops can aid with New Brunswick policy goals: employment creation, population retention, rural service delivery, etc.

“The [Co-operative Associations] Act needs desperately to be modernized. It should be used as a business development tool and not just and act to set out regulations. It should be more proactive.” –Co-op Sector Interview, Moncton Area June 2, 2008

“There are lots of things we would like to do and just do not really have the staff to do them.” –Government Interview, Fredericton August 7, 2008

Recommendations

- Open existing business development and entrepreneurship programs to co-ops
- Encourage collective entrepreneurship in a similar fashion to more ‘traditional’ entrepreneurship
- Prioritize amending Co-operative Associations Act and make staff available for revisions
- Government should consider co-ops for service delivery and other partnerships or development projects
- Co-op sector should take a more active role in advocacy and coordinate amongst various co-op organizations to do so

