



Building Policy 4 the Social Economy

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

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Abstract

This research provides an overview of the policy context for co-ops in New Brunswick; the outdated legislation, the currently inaccessible programs, and the under-active lobbying campaign. The findings presented are extracted from a literature review, a policy scan, as well as interviews with representatives from the provincial government and New Brunswick co-operatives. This qualitative data complements the co-op survey data collected through the Network (Thériault et al. 2008). Lastly, this research provides recommendations for each the provincial government and the co-op sector, as well as recommendations for collaboration between the two in order to best inform effective and efficient policy and program changes.

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

Guiding 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?

Overview of 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

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- Co-operative Associations Act is outdated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.

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