

CoopZone Board/Staff Annual Report 2016¹

Submitted by

Pascal Billard (President), and Hazel Corcoran (Executive Director)

CoopZone can celebrate another successful and engaged year in co-op development within the Canadian co-op sector. This year's AGM marks the seventh anniversary of CoopZone, which continues to have deep roots in co-op development work and close ties with the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation (CWCF), which has been contracted to manage CoopZone. Our membership now includes 52 individuals who are developers, allied members or professional service providers, and 35 individuals associated with the Legal Network. However, many are part of organizational members.

Member Engagement is a top priority. We are always looking for ways to enhance the learning and sharing opportunities of members. Providing channels for engagement across our vast geographic spread, time zones, work schedules, different languages, and the many ways we are all positioned to do co-op development work is always a creative and challenging task - but we do find many ways to bring members together.

Tele-Learning sessions continue to be a popular way to share information. We hosted or co-hosted six tele-learning sessions from April 1st 2015 through the present. We would like to thank the following members and others for contributing their time to present in these sessions.

- 1) Investment Shares in Co-ops (Laird Hunter & Brian Iler)
- 2) Climate change & the Co-op Movement, during the 2015 AGM (Yuill Herbert)
- 3) The Co-op Index – co-hosted with CWCF (Ryszard Stocki)
- 4) Using RRSPs in Co-ops – co-hosted with CWCF (Peter Hough)
- 5) Best practices in co-op development (international, national, local), at CMC Congress; also available as tele-learning (Bruno Roelants, Blair Hamilton & Denyse Guy)
- 6) Questions in Worker Co-op Law – co-hosted with CWCF (Brian Iler)

These sessions typically draw between 12 and 25 members. We are always open to your suggestions for new topics, including topics which you would be willing to host. Notes and/or PowerPoints from most past sessions are available on the CoopZone web site.

The CoopZone **Listservs** continue to be well used by members. The topics have been varied and the responses have been great. Thanks to all who have contributed! There are now three listservs for use by CoopZone members:

- 1) Legal Network: czln@canadianworker.coop
- 2) Other CoopZone members, primarily developers: CZ_members@canadianworker.coop
- 3) All members, combining both of the above listservs: coopzone_all@canadianworker.coop

The general listserv including all the members is the one most commonly used.

CoopZone Newsletter, produced every 3-4 months, is edited by Kaye Grant, CWCF's Communications Manager and also a CoopZone member. Kaye is continually seeking ways to make the newsletter more engaging for members. We invite members to share a short update on

¹ Note that some of this report covers activities up until recently, not only the legal financial year which ended on March 31st, 2016, as noted. The report was written in September, 2016.

a recent project they are working on or one they have asked a question about on the listserv. Kaye is adding links to co-op development sites and other information that may be of interest to developers. If anyone has articles, clips or suggestions to contribute, please get in touch with Kaye (communications@canadianworker.coop).

New website: A very significant project for CoopZone last year was the completion of a new website, which was launched in March. The web site URL is: www.coopzone.coop. We believe it is a much improved and more user-friendly platform than the old site, which had been hosted on obsolete software. It's our first major website overhaul in a number of years, and we think that the new design will make it easier to find the information you're looking for, find related content, and to share CoopZone resources in your networks. Please let us know what you like about the site, and any changes you'd like to see. We'll do our best to keep improving the site based on your feedback.

The Co-op Developer Training Program is an important service that CoopZone offers. The program is led by Course Director Eric Tusz-King. CoopZone's training program provides a developer's perspective to learning effective ways to work with co-ops. Unfortunately there were not enough students signed up last year to offer the courses. Following the evaluation by students year before last, funding was sought and obtained to make improvements to the program, which are underway, based on the recommendations coming out of the evaluation process. Last year Eric completed the modifications to the Introductory level; thanks to Eric for his great work on this. We decided to offer only the Introductory level this year. We are happy to report that there are enough students this year for the Introductory course to run. This fall, Eric will complete the revisions to the Foundations and Advanced courses, and also enable an option to offer them on a modular basis, which we believe will hold significant interest.

If members are aware of people who may have interest in joining the Introductory course, starting in mid-October 2016, please have them contact Eric at CoopZoneTraining@gmail.com. Additional information is available here: www.coopzone.coop/Courses,

We also began to explore new possibilities for co-op training in French. This project has been on hold. However, we will be hosting a meeting of the francophone training committee in part to find out if another organization or an individual wishes to pursue this. If so, we believe that the next steps are to organize a needs assessment and seek funding to create an appropriate program. CoopZone will be able to put some seed money toward this.

The **CoopZone Legal Network** (CZLN) enters its fifth year. A report from the Steering Committee is being presented separately.

Annual CWCF-CoopZone Conference: The annual CWCF-CoopZone conference is always a great time for learning from and connecting with others in the co-op sector, and this past year was no exception. The theme was: *Building Bridges – Pour Réussir Ensemble*, and it was held in Montreal, Quebec. Highlights included the keynote by Esteban Kelly, Co-Executive Director of the US FWC, sessions on the importance of diversity and inclusion in co-ops and on dealing with the retirement of founding members. The CoopZone members present met at a caucus meeting, and there was a workshop on co-op development supports.

This year's CWCF-CoopZone Conference with the theme "*Solidarity Works*" will be held in Vancouver, BC, November 3rd – 5th, with optional tours on Nov. 2nd. Highlights will include The Co-operators' CEO Kathy Bardswick as keynote speaker, on "Solidarity in the Co-op Movement," and Andy Broderick, Vancity VP of Impact Market Investment, on the new Canadian Co-operative Investment Fund. This will also be a celebration of CWCF's 25th anniversary. There will be great opportunities for networking including at the CoopZone caucus, learning new tools and approaches for developing co-ops. The early-bird deadline to register is Sept. 26th. See <http://s.coop/cwcf2016> for the Program, registration details, and the on-line registration link.

Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC): CoopZone has been engaged in CMC, including:

- Hazel Corcoran was on the Board of CMC for a three-year term until June 2016, but decided not to run again. CWCF nominated Stephanie Guico, who is also a member of CoopZone, as a board candidate for an at-large seat, and she was elected. In addition, CoopZone nominated Ben Prunty as a board candidate for the youth seat, but unfortunately he was not elected.
- CoopZone was represented at the most recent CMC Congress in Winnipeg by Board member Erwan Bouchaud as our delegate, with Executive Director Hazel Corcoran also present. Past Director and Past President Kevin Harding was CoopZone's delegate at the prior two CMC member meetings.
- The Memorandum of Understanding among entities involved in co-op development, including CoopZone, provincial associations, some sector federations, etc. has finally been approved for signature. CoopZone looks forward to learning how this will be brought to life in terms of having a venue (Committee, or other) in which the parties to the MOU can actively discuss co-op development strategy and how all parties can better collaborate / consult together.
- Although retired from CWCF/ CoopZone staff, Peter Hough continues on the Board of the Canadian Co-op Investment Fund, as Vice President. The Fund has been legally constituted, and it is expected that it will begin operating in the very near future.

Board of Directors – Fall 2015 to Fall 2016

The 2015-2016 Board consisted of the following Directors:

The CoopZone Board is made up of the following members (as of Sept. 13, 2016). The year beside each director indicates the year in which his or her term expires.

Pascal Billard (President – Quebec Region Director) 2018

Ethel Côté (Vice-President – Ontario (At-Large)) 2017

Jill Kelly (Treasurer – BC Region Director) 2016

Erwan Bouchaud (Manitoba, Prairies Region Director) 2018

Peter Cameron (Ontario Region Director) 2018

David Daughton (PEI, Atlantic Region Director) 2016

Ted Hyland (Legal Network member – Ontario (At-Large)) 2016

In addition, Kevin Harding then of BCCA was on the Board as President from shortly after the last AGM until mid-June when he resigned. In June, Pascal Billard was elected President.

*The year indicates when their current director's term ends.
Thanks to these Directors for serving on the Board!

Acknowledgements:

Departing Board members:

Erwan Bouchaud joined the Board of CoopZone one year ago in the Prairies Region seat. In his position as Project Manager for the Manitoba Cooperative Community Strategy, he coordinates the efforts of working groups made up of members from the Manitoba cooperative community. During his short tenure on the Board, he brought an important connection to the Manitoba Co-op Strategy and many other contributions to our Board, including having acted as delegate to the CMC Congress in June 2016. Merci, Erwan.

David Daughton, whose term ends at this AGM, has decided not to run for the Board again. His commitment to co-operative development in general and CoopZone in particular are extraordinary. David was elected to the first Steering Committee of CoopZone (which was then unincorporated) in May 2006. Upon CoopZone's incorporation, he became part of the founding Board in July 2009, and was elected its first President. He continued as President for four years, until he announced that he would not seek the office again, in 2013. Starting in 2009 when CoopZone developed its on-line training program, David was one of the developers which worked to create the program, and he continued on the Training Team afterward. When the CoopZone Legal Network started in 2012 (David having become in 2011 the Executive Director of the Community Legal Information Association of PEI), he was chosen to be the Chair of its Steering Committee, a role in which he has continued ever since. David has brought wisdom, dedication and unflagging leadership to the Board. Thank you, David.

Kevin Harding, then Director of Co-op Development at BCCA and a worker-member at Incipe Co-op, joined the Board of CoopZone in 2013. He served as Board Treasurer, and then as President starting one year ago. During much of his time on the Board, Kevin was also the CoopZone delegate to CMC and also a member of "Canada's Emerging Co-operators" (CMC), for people under age 35. He brought great insight and energy to the CoopZone Board. After he left BCCA in the spring of 2016, he resigned from the Board of CoopZone. We wish him all the best in his new endeavours, and hope he may return to working in co-op development at some point.

We thank all of them sincerely for their important service to the Board! They will be missed.

Staff: (by Pascal Billard):

Thanks as well to all our capable staff who work hard to keep CoopZone on the road just about every day of the year! We couldn't do this without their expertise and commitment! Thanks from the Board to Hazel, Kaye, Kristin Glenn (bookkeeper since April 2016 when she returned from maternity leave) and Jocelyn Durston (replacement bookkeeper during maternity leave).

Thanks also to all who represent and contribute to CoopZone in so many ways!