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## Building Canada's Co-operative Future Together

### A Message from Mike Toye, Executive Director, Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada

I am honored and excited to join Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC) as Executive Director. I am grateful for the trust placed in me by the Board and look forward to working with you—our valued members—to strengthen and grow the co-operative movement across Canada.

The worsening economic turmoil we are witnessing today highlights the extent to which this is a pivotal time for Canadians, and serves as a call to action for the co-operative movement. But even before today's news, economic uncertainty, affordability challenges, and shifting political landscapes underscored the need for stable, community-driven solutions. Co-operatives have long been a source of resilience, innovation, and economic empowerment. With over 10 million Canadians already engaged in co-operatives, we have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to expand our impact even further.

My aim is for CMC to provide the leadership expected of an apex organization: be a strong voice building support for co-operatives, and convene and collaborate with the many ecosystem actors in the co-operative movement to better leverage our numerous assets and strengths for effective action.

Over the coming weeks, working with CMC's Board, staff, and key stakeholders, I'll be clarifying the strategic priorities that will be the focus of CMC's efforts. A key starting point is the [top issues report](#) from the Canadian Centre for the Study of Co-operatives. The priorities that are emerging from feedback to date are already evolving, based on CMC's particular position, role and opportunities. They are of course a work in progress, and your feedback is welcome:

- **Build Awareness:** The co-operative identity and difference need to be better understood by our key audiences. This will build interest among policymakers, preference among consumers, and pride among members. In an era where buying Canadian has renewed appeal, we must remind Canadians that co-ops are the most Canadian businesses, democratically owned by Canadians, and building wealth for Canadians and our communities from coast to coast to coast.
- **Create an Enabling Environment for the Growth of Co-ops:** This means not just access to financing, but a level playing field in business development programs, policy, and regulatory measures, and, where needed, tailored supports to accelerate co-operative development.
- **Strengthen Leadership:** At an individual level, equipping members, directors and management with the knowledge and skills required for success is vital. But perhaps as a pre-requisite, we need to ensure that the organizational capacity of the co-op movement's ecosystem is optimized to provide effective leadership.

In the current era of profound uncertainty, it is all the more vital that CMC's priorities contribute to strengthening the sustainability and growth of members. But regardless of the priorities that will be identified, CMC will not be able to make meaningful change alone. The priorities selected will have to be ones shared by a critical mass of



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members, so that we can co-ordinate action and generate significant results. I will have more to share at our Congress and AGM in June.

I want to express my gratitude to CMC's dedicated staff, Board, and Committee members for their many contributions to advancing our shared mission. I also extend my sincere thanks to you—our members—for your continued support and commitment.

Together, we will build a stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable future through co-operation. I look forward to working together in the journey ahead.

**Mike Toye**

Executive Director

Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada