

At the time of their founding, some of the mutual insurance companies were similar to co-operatives in principle. However, statutory provisions governing life-insurance companies in Canada make it very difficult to maintain democratic policy-holder control in a large insurance firm. Some of the smaller mutuals, especially in the farm-life insurance field, operate like co-operatives.

Medical-insurance co-operatives were functioning in five of the ten provinces in 1971. These co-operatives started mainly in the hospitalization field but gradually broadened their coverage to medical-surgical, etc. However, their fields were greatly narrowed by the entrance of federal and provincial governments into medical insurance in recent years. But they continue to provide coverage supplemental to the government plans, and in some cases act as insurance agents for the government plans.

*Electrification* — Rural electrification in Alberta, which private companies considered too costly to undertake, is financed largely through co-operatives. These electrification co-operatives organize the farmers of a community to obtain electric services for their farms. When the necessary membership is obtained by a new electrification co-operative, it contracts with a utility company serving the area to build and maintain power-lines and provide power. The power company bills the co-operative for construction at cost. The co-operative has access to long-term, government-guaranteed loans to pay for the power-line. Each member contracts with the co-operative to pay his share of the loan during its term. The co-operatives, organized within the past 25 years, provide electricity to about 90 per cent of Alberta's 63,000 farms.

*Housing* — Co-operative housing, which had its start in Nova Scotia, has gradually spread to all the provinces. The building type was at first the predominant type of housing co-operative. In this type a group of families get together to build single dwellings with the members themselves supplying as much of the labour as possible. In recent years the continuing-type co-operative for collective ownership of multiple housing has come to the fore. This type is usually non-profit and is generally set up as a community or neighbourhood with some common services. The members do not provide any labour; a professional builder is employed. The members are charged a rental to cover the amortization of capital cost over the useful life of the buildings and the cost of taxes and current expenses. Co-operative housing is eligible for funding under the National Housing Act and a total of 20 co-operative finance organizations are approved lenders under the Act.