

Routine Proceedings

Involvement in co-operatives has helped many thousands of individuals learn new business and management skills. This not only helps them to manage their co-operatives but also gives them the skills to better manage their own enterprises and allows them to grow and expand.

[Translation]

I want to mention how committed our young people are to the co-operative approach. Students have started co-ops in their schools to provide services in areas such as savings, housing, school supplies and computing science and, in some instances, to create summer jobs for themselves.

[English]

I urge all members, in our deliberations today and on every other occasion, to consider the potential of co-operation as a tool to help the country to continue to be a nation that is innovative, dynamic and proud of its accomplishments.

From my home province of Saskatchewan in the west where our people demonstrate a high level of participation in co-operative organizations to Quebec, which also enjoys a high level of co-operative activity, the co-op movement is one very important bond of strength and unity.

I congratulate the Canadian co-operative movement on its achievements and wish it much success in the years to come.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect for all those who have contributed to the development of co-operatives that I want to emphasize the importance of National Co-Operative Week and of International Credit Union Day.

The co-op movement reflects the values of mutual help and solidarity which are dear to Quebecers and Canadians. In many regions, the co-op movement provided the solution to ensure an harmonious development geared to the needs of the local community. Agricultural co-operatives were among the first to support the economic development of our regions. They provided an efficient and economical tool to ensure that the required services were available for agricultural production. Co-operatives have played, and continue to play, an important role in job creation. They provide over 133,000 jobs to Canadians and Quebecers.

The co-op system has fully shown its usefulness. It is an important component of Quebec's economy. Just think of the strength of the Caisses populaires Desjardins and of the dairy co-operatives. The co-op movement is based on a local community taking charge; by pooling its resources and working as a team, it can be very successful.

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the International Co-operative Alliance. It is an opportunity to reflect on the fact that, for decades now, people all over the world have believed in the virtues of the co-op movement and have worked hard to make these known to others.

I congratulate these people, I encourage them to keep up the good work, and I wish them the best of success in their future endeavours.

[English]

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of my Reform colleagues with regard to National Co-Operative Week and International Credit Union Day.

The co-op movement has a long and proud tradition in my province of Saskatchewan. It has played a significant role in the development of the province, in our nation and lands beyond our borders.

I pause to reminisce for a minute. My father was involved in some of the early co-operative movements. In fact his membership number in the Western Credit and Savings Union in Swift Current, Saskatchewan was 152 which indicates some of the history and grassroots nature of the movement.

• (1530)

Like most people in the prairies and perhaps across Canada, I belong to several co-operatives. Interestingly enough, one of the first meetings I had as a member of Parliament was with the credit union management, members and boards of directors in west central Saskatchewan. It was a very profitable meeting, indeed. They were concerned about federal issues that are dealt with by the Parliament of Canada and they were happy to meet with their MP.

The concept is simple and sensible. A group of consumers or producers band together to strengthen their bargaining position in the buying and selling of products. When members are buying they increase their competitive edge and when they sell they lower their marketing costs.

Co-ops have had their ups and downs, their triumphs and failures, as do most business enterprises, but they have been most successful when they have stayed out of the world of politics and focused on doing business and doing it well. Co-ops are businesses, and their job is to do business effectively for their owners, who are the co-op members, ordinary people who buy and sell.

Today I extend my best wishes to the co-ops and credit unions of Canada and the world. This includes their members, their boards of directors, their employees and their millions of customers.