



## What is a Co-op?

Co-operatives are community-focused businesses that balance people, planet, and profit. They are democratic and values-based formed to seize local opportunities and meet the needs of the community. Co-ops are legally incorporated (not-for-profit or for-profit) organizations owned by their members who use their services or purchase their products. The co-operative sector keeps dollars circulating within the local economy, provides secure employment, and is a means to revitalize and sustain healthy communities. Possessing a high degree of collective entrepreneurship, the co-operative business enterprise model is inherently ethical in its treatment of its members, employees, suppliers, and environment.

(Source: [http://www.ontario.coop/all\\_about\\_cooperatives/what\\_is\\_a\\_coop](http://www.ontario.coop/all_about_cooperatives/what_is_a_coop))

### **Introduction:**

By the Bushel Community Food Co-operative is an open membership co-operative that was formed as the result of community concern for the state of our local food system. Community members – farmers, consumers, advocates and organizers -- identified the need to find creative ways to efficiently, effectively, and positively make the link between the growing of local ecologically sound food with a solid community of eaters, and how to do this while supporting the growers, organizers and eaters.

The basic concept was that we wanted to provide the foundations for the development of a local sustainable food system where producers, workers/organizers and consumers could work together and build off of the different skills and resources that working co-operatively could bring together. This creates the situation where producers, workers and consumers all sit at the same table, listen to each other and work together with the purpose of finding more sustainable solutions for all involved.

This big concept, needed to start small, so it could get started at all. We started by working to establish a secure distribution system. One which encourages local ecological growers to actively connect with an eager market of eaters to support their shared vision of developing a sustainable local food system.

It was these concepts that lay the foundation from which By the Bushel Community Food Co-operative was formed and incorporated in April 2009 and transformed into a not-for-profit co-operative in 2010.

**Vision Statement:** *“Cultivating a sustainable food community from the ground up”*

**Statements of Purpose:** The purpose of By the Bushel Community Food Cooperative is to take a leading role in developing a local sustainable food system in the Peterborough Area using the co-operative model.

## **Core Objectives:**

- **Coordinate** opportunities for local producers to offer a combination of certified organic and ecologically-responsible products to local consumers/eaters. To provide opportunities for local consumers/eaters to access the products of a more sustainable food system.
- **Develop and provide opportunities** for education, the sharing of skills, information, ideas as well as access to human energy and capital resources to grow our growers. To develop our workers' capacities and support our consumers to access and create a sustainable food culture.
- **Facilitate** a democratic and participatory process (based on the co-operative principles) to engage and empower producers, workers and consumers to derive benefit from their participation in the development of a local sustainable food system.
- Be a **centre** where households, producers, local businesses and community organisations share a passion for building our local economy and a resilience food system.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **Domestic Fair Trade and Local Food Security**

- Finding a balance between providing a living income to our producers, paying our workers a fair wage, and connecting consumers to fair prices for local organic products
- Developing a socially just, participatory process to empower producers, workers and consumers to benefit from our food system
- Ensuring accountability through honest and transparent business, farming and consumer practices

### **Ecological Integrity**

- Participating in ecologically-sound decision making that promotes the health and vitality of the land and its ecosystems
- Working as a community to continually improve our relationship with the land that supports us
- Soil, water & air conservation as part of our sustainable farming practices
- Reducing carbon emissions as local organic producers

## **Building Connections and Community**

- Employing co-operative principles based upon openness, democratic, and participatory practices in working towards realising a sustainable regional food system
- Building a strong, resilient community based on co-operation, friendship and inclusiveness

By the Bushel Community Food Co-operative is an innovative co-operative of food producers and processors, dedicated staff and a community of eaters working towards rebuilding our relationship to land, good healthy food and community. With the commitment to producing and selling ecologically-responsible food, By The Bushel works to maintain the integral connection to local farmers and community members. We are dedicated to sharing our sustainable activities with the community through memberships, community partnerships, celebratory activities, and in nurturing our local food supply.