

ACCA Conference Red Deer November 20-21 2015

Highlights and Connections

I came away with great gratitude after the ACCA gathering. In our province we can hold very different political, economic, and social views, and still have breakfast together!

Thanks to Ayanna for asking me to attend on her behalf. I have always been curious about the ACCA events so I was happy to be there. In the days since the November weekend, I have thought several times about the economic and other choices we have in our country, how attitudes have shifted since the May provincial and October federal elections, and how much prosperity we enjoy, even in difficult times.

Examples of cooperation

200 farmers could not get their grain to market so they formed a cooperative to get it done. They struggle with some members choosing the better price in the short term, but have enough loyal members to keep it going for the long haul. Follow up to the railway may be purchase of a local co-op store, to redistribute the wealth. The fellow speaking had voted for the new provincial government and was optimistic about

Bill Oemichen, of the U.S. Cooperative Network, spoke about the strength of co-ops in Minnesota and Wisconsin. He sits on co-op boards that operate in billions of dollars. The for-profit co-op world has a strength (money) that we in nonprofit housing do not. Bill welcomed a study tour from ACCA and introduced the new UFA president and CEO. Carol Kitchen, experienced in the U.S. as a government lobbyist, was brought to Alberta to guide farmers in the years ahead. Currently living in Calgary, she referred to her farm upbringing in Illinois several times. She expressed concern about the safety regulations being brought in by the NDP government, the quick timeline. She knew the previous government was “pro business” and wondered what relationship with the new government members would yield.

As an aging housing co-op member I was keen to hear about *health co-ops* being researched by ACCA. These could conceivably be everything to everybody, providing a full slate of health professionals to those interested. (Not exactly sure how these would be organized, by whom, how paid for, and when instituted.) I look forward to updates on health co-op development.

Some of the Conference sponsors:

AFRWC

The Co-operators

EQUUS

Federation of Alberta Gas Coops

Miller Thomson

North Parkland Power

Northeast Gas Coop

Rocky REA

Servus Credit Union

UFA

Government Lobbying

The session on government lobbying was lively and informative. Particularly Jacquie Fenske, former Ft Sask/Vegreville MLA, gave tips and suggestions about personal contact, getting along with people, and promoting causes within relationships over a long period of time. Bert Paulssen, Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops, 40 years comfortable with the PCs, described learning a new language and process, said it didn't matter who was in government. Relationship building with government required working with whomever was in office. Annie McKittrick, new MLA, and the Red Deer MLA arrived to join in the discussion.

Debbie Noddes, Servus Credit Union, gave a lively address about an African woman she had met and the impact of relationship for both of them. A young co-op person from Rocky Mountain House described her credit union experience at Goldeye camp, and mentioned she was involved to this day as an employee.

I appreciated conversation with the Reeve of Clearwater County, his telling of relationship building with new government members, how open they were, how much he admired Rachel Notley, and her father.

The Red Deer site was pleasant and comfortable. There WAS a chocolate fountain for dipping. A couple of farmers thought my food was WAY too healthy (granola, yogurt, fruit) as they dove in to bacon and eggs (sausage and potato). Darlene G thought the Co-op Kool-Aid, that gave us such warm feelings, was very good this year. We were happy to pick up NACHA's award and hope that after the Bill 6 fallout, we can continue to have breakfast together!



*Valary Howard,
Riverdale Housing Co-op*



*Lacey Chwz,
ACCA*

Brian Scott, Communitas

