

**CHAIRE**

**de recherche du Canada  
en économie sociale**

**ESG UQÀM**

## **Collection** *Recherche*

no **R-2011-01**

**The Green Melon Co-op Case**

Valérie Michaud

Juillet 2011

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Cahier de la Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie sociale  
Collection Recherche – no R-2011-01  
« **The Green Melon Co-op Case** »  
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ISBN : 978-2-89605-320-9

Dépôt légal : 2011

Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec  
Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Canada

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## PRÉSENTATION

La Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie sociale étudie l'innovation sociale produite dans l'économie sociale, afin de mieux comprendre son rôle dans les transformations sociales. L'économie sociale désigne une forme particulière d'organisations : coopératives, associations ou organismes à but non lucratif, mutuelles. Elles fonctionnent selon un certain nombre de valeurs, de principes et de règles qui particularisent les processus de décision, les finalités, la répartition des surplus, le sociétariat, le financement, etc. Établissant des passerelles entre le développement économique et le développement social, l'économie sociale cherche à servir la collectivité plutôt qu'à engendrer des profits pour les actionnaires.

Du fait de leur nature, de leur origine et de leur mission, les organisations d'économie sociale offrent des conditions propices à l'innovation sociale. Face aux transformations du marché et de l'État, les demandes sociales affluent et suscitent le besoin d'inventer de nouvelles façons de faire. Le mode participatif de l'économie sociale est riche d'innovations sociales, rapprochant le consommateur du producteur, le bénéficiaire du prestataire, les besoins des individus de ceux des collectivités. Ce faisant, l'économie sociale peut contribuer à la transformation du secteur public (réseaux de politiques publiques, développement durable) et du secteur privé (gestion participative, responsabilité sociale corporative, bilan social). En ce sens, l'économie sociale est un véritable laboratoire d'expérimentation d'une société en mutation.

Les travaux de la Chaire se concentrent sur deux principaux terrains d'étude, soit celui des services de proximité (logement communautaire, aide domestique, cuisines collectives, centres de la petite enfance, etc.) et celui des services collectifs, notamment les services de soutien au développement (institutions financières, fonds de développement, corporations de développement économique communautaire, groupes de ressources techniques, etc.). Les recherches s'articulent autour de trois principaux chantiers. Le premier est celui de la **gouvernance**, afin de comprendre comment les instances plurielles et les partenariats favorisent la prise en compte d'objectifs relevant à la fois du marché et de l'intérêt général. Le deuxième chantier est celui des **modes de développement et de financement**, dans un univers où le capital n'est pas rémunéré par les profits. Le troisième chantier est celui des **méthodes d'évaluation** spécifiques à une double mission économique et sociale.

À terme, le but est de comprendre ce qui fait cohérence dans la contribution de l'économie sociale au renouvellement et à la démocratisation du modèle de développement. L'économie peut ainsi être mise au service de la société.

À fin de rendre compte des travaux de la Chaire, nous proposons trois collections :

1. Recherche
2. Conférences
3. Hors Série

Marie J. Bouchard  
Titulaire



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## **NOTES SUR L'AUTEURE**

**Valérie Michaud** est professeure en gestion des entreprises sociales et collectives au Département d'Organisation et ressources humaines de l'École des sciences de la gestion de l'UQAM. Elle est chercheure associée à la Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie sociale.



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## RESUME

La Coopérative Green Melon est une coopérative de solidarité, *i.e.* une coopérative multipartite (*multistakeholder*), du secteur de l'environnement. Ce cas documente une innovation particulière : une politique de sélection de produits mise de l'avant dès la création de l'organisation à la fin des années 90, et donc bien avant que de telles politiques deviennent monnaie courante dans les entreprises en général. Si la politique permet d'énoncer clairement les critères retenus pour choisir les produits à offrir à la Coopérative Green Melon et de faciliter le processus de sélection des produits, elle exprime aussi un certain nombre de tensions. Ces tensions sont associées aux dimensions du développement durable (piliers social, environnemental et économique) de même qu'aux différentes parties prenantes de la coopérative (membres utilisateurs, travailleurs et de soutien). Le cas suggère que l'inclusion de parties prenantes multiples à la gouvernance organisationnelle peut mener à des innovations sociales liées au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale des entreprises. Enfin, le cas permet de cerner les défis de gestion de la dynamique association-entreprise coopérative.

## SUMMARY

The Green Melon Co-op is a solidarity co-operative, *i.e.* a multistakeholder co-operative, of the environmental sector. This case presents a specific innovation: the Co-op's product selection policy. This policy was developed from the organization's foundation in the late '90s, and thus well before such policies became more mainstream. The policy allows to clearly state the criteria used to select the products to be carried by the Green Melon Co-op and to ease the workers' product selection process. But it also expresses a number of tensions associated to the different dimensions of sustainable development (social, environmental and economic) and to the Co-op's different stakeholders (user, worker and support members). The case suggests that multistakeholder governance may lead to social innovations with regards to sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. It also allows to seize the challenges of sustaining both the democratic and business dimensions of co-operatives.



## SUMMARY TABLE OF THE GREEN MELON CO-OP CASE<sup>1</sup>

Issues to Consider	<i>In the Green Melon Co-op Case</i>
Multistakeholder Dynamics	Constitutive “multistakeholderism”, <i>i.e.</i> from the foundation, three types of stakeholders (worker, user and support members) were identified and worked together to start the Co-op (although the “worker” members were initially not paid)
Governance	Institutionalized and constitutive “multistakeholderism” (as opposed to an ad-hoc or more formal addition to a traditional unistakeholder governance structure)
Innovation	Innovative product selection and purchasing practices leading to further social innovations (greater awareness of customers and suppliers alike with regards to the social and environmental impacts of production)

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<sup>1</sup> Fictitious name



## 1. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE GREEN MELON CO-OP

Green Melon Co-op is a “solidarity co-operative”<sup>2</sup> based in a major city of Quebec, selling a wide range of eco-friendly products (office supplies, house cleaning products, personal care products, organic/fair-trade food and clothing apparel, alternative press, etc.) in a commercial space that also serves as a café. Since the end of 2008, it also operates an online store as part of a strategy to reach out a larger pool of customers.

Green Melon Co-op was founded in 1999 by a little group of friends and neighbours, many of whom were community organizers and progressive-thinkers. Although they did not initially have a clear idea of what their project would turn out to be, they knew from the start that they wanted to create a social gathering space for their neighbourhood, and they wanted it to be a community economic development initiative. Numerous brainstorm and business plan development sessions later, a store (comprising a café) opened on Buy Nothing Day of 2000<sup>3</sup>.

Three types of memberships are available: worker, users and support members. A social share is \$10 for users and workers alike, and \$100 for support members. All members have equal rights at the AGM (one member, one vote) and also at their Board of administration, comprised of 3 elected members from each of the categories. Membership demographics split as follow: over 7,000 user members, less than 10 worker members (not all workers decide to become worker members) and about 100 support members (most being neighbours who accept to give a higher financial contribution, or product suppliers).

## 2. NATURE OF THE INNOVATION

Well before the concern for the social and ecological conditions of production of consumer goods started being voiced by people outside advocacy groups, and well before this concern actually started being shared by a greater part of the population, the Green Melon Co-op positioned itself as an important actor in the emerging market for socially and environmentally responsible products. It was one of the very first stores to sell fair-trade coffee the province of Quebec. Since its opening, it has often been the object of press coverage for offering certain ecological products that can hardly be found elsewhere in town, needless to say elsewhere in the whole province. One of the reasons behind this is that the Green Melon Co-op had already developed an innovative product selection policy to orient its purchasing practices, even before it opened its doors. Indeed, the “General Product Purchasing Policy” (hereafter, GPPP, see Appendix A) was presented to members present at the General assembly of May 2000, that is

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<sup>2</sup> In 1997, a new type of co-op was created in Quebec: the “coopérative de solidarité”. Contrarily to the co-operative tradition of “unistakeholderism”, this new type of organization not only permitted but forced co-ops to have at least two different types of members both in the membership and at their board of directors. The three possible types of members are the following: worker members, user members and support members.

<sup>3</sup> Quite an interesting day to pick to open a retail store; this choice tells us a great deal about the alternative, anti-capitalist mindset of the co-founders.

over 6 months prior to the opening. The concern for responsible purchasing was thus more than a mere opportunistic reaction to customers' growing awareness of products' origins. Rather, it actively contributed to building this awareness<sup>4</sup> and in that sense, it constitutes an interesting social innovation.

Although the GPPP document itself aims to provide a “broad framework of principles and guidelines that [the Green Melon] Co-op uses to select products and suppliers”, the level of details and the associated, potential contradictions it raises can quickly prove to be puzzling for anyone involved in its application. By stating many different criteria upon which selecting a product without prioritizing them, it creates obvious tensions. For instance, should the Co-op buy a non-organic yet local product, or prefer something organic from California? What's most important: fairtrade or organic? Should the Co-op encourage a small supplier selling non-certified products, or a large corporation that offers third-party certified items? A small for-profit business or a large co-op? These are just a few of the many dilemmas faced when trying to follow the guidelines of the GPPP at the moment of choosing one given product... And the Co-op sells over a thousand different products, while trying to avoid the middlemen in order to give both the producers and its user members a better price<sup>5</sup>. This gives an idea of the enormous task of researching, selecting and purchasing a product, a process that the Co-op is addressing in an innovative way<sup>6</sup>.

### 3. REASONS FOR THE INNOVATION

- The Mission of the Co-op that explicitly encompasses 1) a plurality of stakeholders (including some non-members, namely the Earth, community at large, local suppliers and vendors) and 2) a plurality of values and principles (respect of the environment and of members, democracy, product accessibility, education, participation);
- A further “social responsibility” role of product purchasing: some unpopular products are kept on the shelves (on concession) as part of Co-op's “community engagement” (both to support local artists, for instance, and to ensure product accessibility);
- The initial investment in research is now paying off, as better informed, sensitive customers and the larger community recognize the Co-op as a leader in socially and ecologically responsible products.

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<sup>4</sup> The mere modification of customer behaviour in this domain constitutes a noteworthy social innovation.

<sup>5</sup> While equivalent-sized stores usually deal with less than 10 distributors, the Co-op deals with about 250 suppliers (Communication Coordinator, observation 2005-06).

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for “The True Story of a Coop Product” in the Activities Report.

#### **4. ORIGIN (*AND EVOLUTION*) OF THE INNOVATION**

Initially, there was an active “Product Research Committee”, researching potentially new products for the Co-op. That committee was composed of different stakeholders; the volunteer work accomplished by some user members helped reduce the workload of workers. This also means that support members also had their say in the purchasing process. Knowing that many of the initial support members were suppliers of the Co-op, this leads to the notion of co-construction of the demand and offer (a social innovation in itself), to the integration of external stakeholders into a rather internal process. When the Co-op was formed, the offer of ecological products was still marginal, and this meant investing a lot of time and energy into identifying and researching potential products.

Nowadays, with the explosion of self-proclaimed “ecological” products, product purchasing practices have evolved. For the Store Manager, a normal day at the Co-op almost invariably involves the visit of at least one sales representative trying to sell his or her products. Third-party certification greatly simplifies the first screening for many products from the part of the Store Manager, while reassuring users in their purchasing decisions. The Store Manager often tells sales representatives that he will not consider a product until it gets certified (Eco-Logo, different organic certifications or fair-trade, depending on the type of product), influencing manufacturers to back their social and environmental self-made discourse with serious engagement and third-party certification.

#### **5. HOW THE INNOVATION WAS CONDITIONED BY MULTISTAKEHOLDER DYNAMICS**

The fact that the Co-op is formed of user members, worker members and support members greatly affects its perceived role with regards to purchasing practices. First of all, it must be said that the actual GPPP was drafted and adopted by the 3 different types of members. In addition to this, multistakeholderism of the Co-op brings in completely different dynamics with regards to product selection.

Indeed, many traditional enterprises keep carrying so-called “natural” products, trusting sales representatives’ say that they are safe and adopting a “unidirectional approach to consumption”. The fact that users are members and co-owners of the Co-op provides the Co-op with a role of “watchdog” for them. The Co-op goes refuses to fill shelves with products that offer good profit margins if they contain any suspicious ingredients. There is a constant effort to find new products to answer user members’ needs, which sometimes results in some low margin products being kept in inventory to guaranty their accessibility. Empowered and well-informed users also feel they really have a say in the Co-op’s selection of products; many of them express their needs, make suggestions for new products or complain when unsatisfied.

This makes store workers important vectors of information and suggestion themselves. Among other means of communication, workers' meetings are used to convey comments and suggestions to improve the Co-op's product offer according to users' comments. Then, in turn, the workers, and especially the Store manager, act as an intermediary with suppliers -some of whom are support members- , trying to influence them to change their practices to better serve users' needs... and leading to some further, external social innovations.

What this case shows is that the integration of multiple stakeholders may lead to innovation with regards to corporate social responsibility/sustainable development.

## ANNEXES – APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A - THE GENERAL PRODUCT PURCHASING POLICY

**This document provides the broad framework of principles and guidelines that [Green Melon Co-op] uses to select products and suppliers.**

1. All products carried by [Green Melon Co-op] should be congruent with the mission statement of the Co-op.
2. The overriding principle is that products and suppliers must meet our specific requirements for product quality and overall service.
3. All decisions on products and suppliers are the responsibility of the staff. The Board of Directors is responsible for forming a product research committee. This committee will be responsible for detailed purchasing policies and research new products. Every effort will be made to ensure member participation in this committee.
4. Any member may submit a complaint if they believe that a product is not congruent with the mission statement and policies of the Board regarding product sourcing and suppliers. The Board of Directors will make the final decision in such cases.
5. Priority will be given to manufacturers and service providers who are locally based in [neighborhood]. After this, priority will be given to manufacturers and service providers in accordance with their geographic proximity to the store. Priority will also be given to organizations, firms or factories:
  - Whose values and ethics are consistent with the [Green Melon Co-op]'s mission statement;
  - Who are proactive in improving the living standards of their employees;
  - Who are co-operatives or non-profit organizations;
  - Who can demonstrate that they operate in a socially just and environmentally sustainable manner.
6. All efforts should be made to purchase products directly from their original source.
7. When possible, all items sold by the [Green Melon Co-op] must carry certification from one of the appropriate agencies, such as OCIA with reg. number, Québec Vrai, Demeter or Écocert - Garantie Bio for organic certification, the Eco-logo for overall environmental certification, the OECD test for biodegradability, Transfair, International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT), Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO) International or the Fair Trade Federation (FTF) for fair trade certification.
8. The [Green Melon Co-op] will only conduct business with organizations and carry products that pose no unusual risks to the safety and well being of its employees and members where none are anticipated.
9. [Green Melon Co-op] employees will use their best judgment in applying these standards and guidelines, as well as the more detailed ones prepared by the product research committee, to the selection of organizations and manufacturers with whom we propose to start or to continue in a business relationship.

Updated June 2005



## **APPENDIX B – ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR 2003-04**

### **Green Melon Co-op Activities Report for 2003-2004 From January 2003 to September 2004**

#### **1. Introduction**

In 2003-2004, Green Melon Co-op experienced significant growth, which helped it to better serve its ever-increasing membership. Greater sales, more human resources and partnerships with a number of local groups have enabled the Co-op to broaden its services and products, in addition to reinforcing its presence and reputation among individuals and like-minded local groups.

The strategic planning that begun in June 2003 with a consulting firm greatly contributed to the constant bustle of activities at the Green Melon Co-op. The democratic process has proven to be conducive to studying, discussing and reflecting on the co-operative's current and future situation. We chose our development goals by working with the hopes, opportunities, limits and ecological values of the Co-op and its community. In addition to a strategic plan for the next three years, the Co-op finished the exercise with a new human resources structure that creates new, sustainable jobs and takes advantage of the current staff's skills and members' willingness to become more involved in their co-operative.

All these changes have occurred in a place that will be always filled with innovative spirit and stories – sometimes moving, sometimes fanciful. It is through a convergence of the past, the present and the future, that the Green Melon Co-op will be able to fulfil its mission of providing a positive example of an organization that offers solutions for responsible consumption to improve the health of both individuals and the community as a whole, while protecting and respecting our environment.

#### **2. Changes in the Range of Products**

The Green Melon Co-op team constantly strives to respond to the needs of its members and our environment for ecological household products. Before listing 2003-2004's new products, the following is a brief explanation of the process involved in putting a product onto the shelves at the Co-op.

### *The True Story of a Co-op Product*

When a product is proposed by a member of the co-operative or a sales representative, the first step is in-depth research, by telephone, Internet, paper documentation and through informal references, into the product or line of products in question. We evaluate consistency of the company or producer, manufacturing process (from start to finish), packaging and transport required, what happens to the product after consumption, etc., with the Co-op's purchasing policy (available on our Web site). Luckily, there are several certification systems that make our task easier, even though they do not necessarily guarantee the choice of product.

Several other factors must be taken into account: how the product fits in with the categories of items offered by the Co-op, the demand for the product (a complex factor in itself; depending on season, buying habits, etc.), ease and range of use, wholesale and retail prices, minimal volume for placing orders, frequency of delivery, physical space required, method of payment, etc. If a specific product does not fulfil all these criteria, but the type of item interests us, we try to find alternatives! This process may take weeks or even months.

If we cannot order directly from the producer, we must then find a distributor and apply to open an account (which can sometimes take a week). Then we place the order and wait for it to arrive, which takes between one day and six weeks. When the box arrives at the door, the story is still not finished (but almost!). Someone must verify whether the order is complete, enter the data into the computer label the items, place them on the shelf and find space to store the extra stock. In addition to all this, the employees must be trained, because they are responsible for informing members about the product. Recently, some producers agreed to come and discuss their products in person at employee meetings. This gives our well-informed and clear-sighted employees the opportunity to ask the right questions and sometimes even to propose improvements! Then you receive an e-mail that announces the arrival of a new product at your favourite Co-op.

All the above represents only part of our product management, of course. Afterward, many changes may occur with respect to production and delivery, or because of members' and employees' comments, market forces, product popularity, etc.

It would be wonderful for members to become even more involved in the managing of products offered at the Co-op. If you're interested, let us know, as we have planned to set up a products and services committee.

### **3. Our Community, Social and Educational Activities**

The Co-op maintains its crucial role as a meeting place, clearinghouse and educational centre, and vector for change toward a more ecologically aware society. People who were there at its inception continue to frequent the Co-op, and a whole new generation of individuals, families and community groups have joined us as well. All these informal presences cannot be listed but they are so very important.

Approximately 25 more formal meetings took place at the Co-op in 2003-2004.

### **4. Community Activities**

Since its beginnings, Green Melon Co-op has actively participated in events organized by our many partners, in our neighbourhood and beyond. These events are golden opportunities to raise the Co-op's visibility, recruit new members, disseminate information on more responsible consumption and to update local ecological news. Staff and volunteers are sent out on these crucial missions. If this type of activity interests you, we need members who enjoy being spokespersons, to help ensure our presence at a greater number of events and to lighten the load for our staff. Please contact the members' involvement committee for more information.

### **Other Forms of Co-operation**

Green Melon Co-op barter with all sorts of groups with goals similar to ours.

### **5. Media Relations**

Because Green Melon Co-op reflects many of society's concerns, it is a popular subject in the media. As more and more people are trying to improve their relationship with their environment, reporters and journalists often call on the Co-op's expertise in environmentally-friendly consumerism.

### **6. Development of Communication Tools**

- Total overhaul of the Website in August 2003
- Addition of new sections (Info-Co-op and Info-Action) to the monthly e-mail
- Introduction of a bulletin board with internal activities at the Co-op (easel on the first page)
- Planning for a general brochure on the Co-op's activities
- Creation of a video on Earth Day 2004 celebrations
- Planning to install the Co-op's mission, values and purchasing policy inside the store



## APPENDIX C – MINUTES OF THE 2004 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### GREEN MELON CO-OP MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY Held September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004 @ 19h at the CO-OP

19h00—19h30

Registration of Participants. Participants receive their voting cards and documentation.

19h30

#### I. Opening of Assembly

Opening remarks by the President of the Board (“President”).

- Opening words
- Introduces new persons at the Co-op: Store Coordinator; intern - special events
- Explanation of meeting format.
- Election of assembly president and secretary. Board President proposes Carla as president of the assembly and Julio et Bea as secretaries. Proposal seconded by Simon and Marya.

#### 2. Approval of Agenda

Agenda presented by Carla. General Coordinator (“Coordinator”) proposes the following changes:

- Jim, a user member, wants to precise something about cycles in the Co-op

Carla proposes changes to the agenda. Seconded by Simon.

#### 3. Approval of minutes

The minutes of the special assembly of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004 (AGM for the year 2002) are adopted on the Coordinator’s proposal. Simon seconds.

#### 4. Reports

##### 4.1 Financial report

The financial report was presented by Robert, treasurer. Main points are:

- the Co-op is growing,
- the store is selling a range of new products
- there has been a small increase in salaries.

Carla opens the question period.

- Question from Marya: Sales are up and expenses are down, so why the deficit?

Coordinator: Over the past two months, expenses have outstripped revenues. Overall, though, things are going well, despite the deficit.

President: At first the Co-op had a local development agency grant. That will end soon, so we’ll have to fly on our own.

- Question from user member: I thought we’d already achieved financial autonomy. That’s what was said at the last AGM. We cannot allow ourselves another deficit.

Robert: That’s true, but we can see the situation is improving.

Coordinator: The deficit was forecast. After September 2003 we started seeing better numbers. It’s still

tight, but we believe we can continue to improve.

- Question from another user member: Are membership fees included in the budget?

Robert: On page 2 of the financial report.

Coordinator: we sold 706 social shares at 10 \$ in 2003.

A board member comments: The goal of the Co-op is not to make money. We should focus on the accomplishments of the past year.

Question period ends. Carla asks for approval of financial report. Robert proposes, Alexa seconds.

#### 4.2 Activity Report

Presented by the Communications coordinator

The report is handed out to participants, followed by these remarks:

- I'm very pleased to see all that was accomplished at the Co-op in 2003-04. Services to members are increasing. It's very positive.
- I've made a list of the Coop's new products, which can be seen on display at the back of the store.
- Activities: we've become a reference point in the city. People call and visit with all kinds of questions.

Report from the Coordinator - PowerPoint presentation from the Coordinator:

- 2003 and 2004 were very busy. Growth in sales, membership, products, etc.
- There were big changes in September with regard to staff. Some left and were replaced.
- We're very pleased to have experienced worker members, who are very talented and know the Co-op well.
- The new employees helped reduce my workload significantly. I've long felt that I've been doing two jobs, and this was becoming unbearable. Things are much easier for me now.
- I want to thank the staff for their fine work, and especially the members of the board.
- A word about membership. 706 new members in 2003. 65% live within 10 minutes of the Co-op. Members are very important for sales.
- PowerPoint showing revenues vs. Expenses from 2001 to 2003. We invested a lot in salaries in 2002.
- PowerPoint on revenues and expenses projected through end of 2005.
- We need to continue to ensure the Co-op grows in order to survive, thanks to the energy we're all putting in.
- PowerPoint on sales of products by category in 2003.
- Coffee is a big seller, and food sales make up 7% of total sales, even though the range of those products is limited.

Carla opens question period.

- Marya: How were sales on Buy-Nothing Day

Answer: The cash was closed.

- Louise: What are the sales projections based on?

Carla: On the current increase in sales of organic and related products. Projections for 2005-06 are conservative estimates. The projections are sound.

President: Spending per visit has gone down a bit. But all other indicators suggest growth in the coming months.

- Question: What are the criteria for sale of food products?

Coordinator: That's a discussion that's taking place at the board level. We began by selling dairy products and coffee, then decided to add eggs; it's a question of complementary products. It's not a priority in our strategic plan, but it's still one direction we're exploring.

Worker member: Here in the neighborhood, organic products are widely available. It's a big job, it has to be done well, there are space and organizational issues. If we decide to expand in that area, we'll be consulting members first.

- Question: How are coffee sales?

Coordinator: There is certainly an interest in food products, and coffee is in the top 200 of our best sellers.

Carla closes the question period on the activities report.

## **5. Recommendations of the Board of Directors:**

### **5.1 Budget 2004**

Coordinator presents the budget forecast. The big difference is salaries: there is a lot of spending in this area. We're staffed 90 more hours per week than in 2004. Those new resources will help us meet our goals and objectives.

Carla asks if there are any other questions on the budget in general.

- Question: How do you plan to increase profits?

Coordinator: We may raise the price of coffee, while still staying competitive with other cafes in the area. We'll remove some products that aren't selling well and replace them with new ones. We plan to raise our margins on some products, like clothing.

### **5.2 Strategic Planning Process:**

Presentation by a member of the strategic planning committee.

- I took part in the committee from September 2003 to February 2004. About twenty members volunteered on this committee.
- the committee drew up a list of 15 strategic orientations
- the committee divided those into 3 groups
- six of the 15 were retained
- During the second and third meetings, each committee member made a twenty minute presentation on the strategic orientation they'd chosen to research. The Board continued the work undertaken with the consulting firm
- I have a very positive opinion of these meetings. They were very respectful of everyone's opinion
- I wanted to be involved because of my interest in these causes, and I think these orientations show that we can continue moving forward and advance the Co-op's mission.

Presentation by the president

- The Board was handed the committee's report in order to guide our decisions.
- Staff is currently very underpaid, and we have very able employees we do not want to lose. This is one problem we have to resolve!
- We need to be clearer in identifying the needs of our members.

- The Co-op is running off in all directions; store, community resources, etc. This requires a great deal of energy and work.
- We have 3500 members but many do not visit the Co-op every year.
- We need your input regarding the Co-op's future direction. We see 4 principle orientations: Sales to outside Organizations; a second store; purchasing the building; capitalization.
- Sales to organizations is one area we are committed to developing.
- We need to continue studying the possible purchase of the building. It could be economically interesting and help stabilize our finances. Right now, our lease is renewed every three years.
- Second Store: there's been a lot of interest in opening another Co-op branch. This will take a lot of research, in order to ensure that the people involved share the Co-op's values
- We need your support to continue this work.

Carla: We need this meeting to approve a mandate for pursuing this work.  
President proposes and Simon seconds.

### **5.3 Committee on Member involvement**

Presentation of 2 involved user members

Five minutes presentation from committee. Six or seven committees of members will be established to help develop strategic direction for the Co-op.

- There will be both permanent and temporary committees.
- October 18<sup>th</sup> is the date set for inviting members to the Co-op to discuss their involvement.
- We want to start these committees by the end of October.
- PowerPoint presentation of the different committees. Store layout, support for in-store sales, range of products and services, second store, building purchase, capitalization.
- In one year, the work of these committees will be presented at the Annual Meeting

## **6. Election of Administrators**

Four new Board members are elected by acclamation.

## **7. Varia**

Jim: People should leave their dogs and bicycles outside.

Other remarks from the assembly members:

- We need microphones at the next meeting.
- We should be talking more about the "co-operative" vocation of the Co-op
- We would like to see a copy of the budget next time.

A worker member thanks Coordinator, fellow worker members and the Board for their fine work.

## **8. Meeting Closes**

Peter proposes the meeting closed. Seconded by Simon.

Carla declares the meeting closed.

The meeting was followed by a snack. Many members participated in lively discussions, and shared cheese, bread and beer, generously donated by a support member.