



A Health Co-op in Aylmer



A Call to Invest in Your Health and Your Community!

By Raoul Côté

The Beginning

In the winter of 2001, a group of citizens and physicians in Aylmer began exploring mechanisms for improving access to health services for the residents of the Aylmer sector and its surroundings. The idea of a co-operative quickly emerged as an attractive solution, and when looked at more closely, the multi-stakeholder co-operative formula seemed even more attractive; it would comprise a variety of stakeholders including user-members, employee-members and support-members.

In January 2004, with a hundred members, the Aylmer Health Coop became the owner of the Aylmer-Lucerne Medical Clinic located at 67 du Couvent. On September 1st 2004, the co-op counted more than 1,200 members. The 11 members of the board are volunteers and many Aylmer residents give time, energy and experience to this community project.

Some facts about Aylmer and its Health Coop

- In the Aylmer sector, there is only one doctor for every 6,000 inhabitants. This means that there is an enormous need of a dozen doctors for the Aylmer sector only.

- A patient with a family doctor can wait up to two years for an annual check-up.
- Many residents of the Aylmer sector do not have a family doctor.
- During the last year, the co-op acquired new medical equipment thanks to donations from social clubs and companies.
- The existing co-op is creating a dual precedent: it is the first urban health co-operative in Eastern Canada, and is the first co-operative to purchase an existing clinic with physicians and tenants in place. The Aylmer Health Coop is also innovative in that a private clinic in place for over 20 years has taken collective action and is now jointly owned by users, employees and the health professionals practising at the clinic.

For the first time in Quebec, physicians are participating in the democratic life of a co-operative.

How You Can Become a Member

You want more doctors and better health services in your community?

Help yourself by joining the Aylmer Health Coop.

To become successful, the co-operative needs your support.

Invest in your health and in your community! To become a member, each adult must acquire 5 social shares of \$10 (\$50). You can pay at the clinic on 67 du Couvent or at the Aylmer Caisse Populaire Desjardins in cash or by cheque payable to the Aylmer Health Coop. For more information call at (819) 684-1234 ext. 611 or visit our Web site: <http://coopsa.org>.

The Aylmer Health Coop is Recruiting New Members

The Aylmer Health Coop is starting its recruiting campaign. The Coop has been in operation for eight months already and it has gone from 100 members in January 2004 to more than 1,200 in September.

In order to achieve its goal of 2,700 members for December 2004, the Coop is running a recruiting campaign from now until the end of the year.

Be on the look out for our posters, our advertisements and especially our new leaflet that you will receive by mail in English as well as French. (The former leaflet is available at the clinic).

The Aylmer Health Coop leaflet confirms the acquisition of new medical equipment and describes our goals for the next three years. We are also still looking for new doctors.