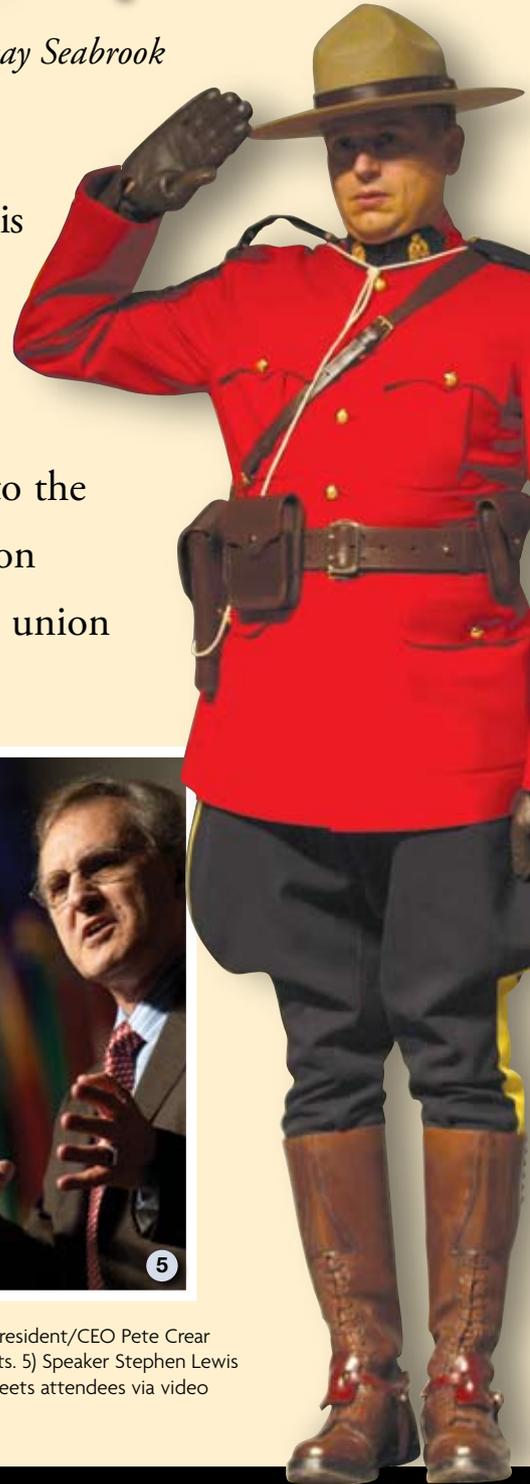


CONFLUENCE of Leadership

By Lindsay Seabrook

For four days this summer, more than 2,500 participants from 62 countries transformed Calgary, Alberta into the center of the international credit union movement. The year's largest global credit union gathering yielded impressive results.



BILL MARSH PHOTOGRAPHY



1) Outgoing WOCCU chair Gary Plank (right) congratulates incoming chair Melvin Edwards. 2) WOCCU president/CEO Pete Crear addresses the crowd. 3) WOCCU board members are sworn in. 4) WYCUP members doff their white hats. 5) Speaker Stephen Lewis inspires. 6) Attendees listen attentively. 7) The parade of flags dazzles. 8) WOCCU's Afghanistan team greets attendees via video uplink. 9) Rodeo festivities close the conference. 10) North American native dancers entertain.

Proud bearers waved the colorful national flags of 62 countries during the opening ceremonies of the 2007 World Credit Union Conference in Calgary, Alberta. Traditional Native North

American dancers and Canadian Mounties added to the on-stage festivities. With more than 2,500 attendees, the World Council of Credit Unions' (WOCCU) 2007 conference was the largest and most diverse meeting of credit union representatives in a decade. The conference, which took place July 29-Aug. 1, was co-hosted by Credit Union Central of Canada (CUCU). The international event connected participants on new levels, highlighting the social aspect of credit unions more than in years past.

Prior to the conference's start, 47 credit union regulators from 15 countries attended WOCCU's 5th Annual Regulators' Roundtable for a two-day session. Regulators of both mature and developing credit union systems exchanged experiences and focused on best practices for supporting strong credit unions at the national level. WOCCU's Young Credit Union People (WYCUP) program participants under the age of 35 hosted a networking session and enjoyed a special ceremony of their own. All were deemed honorary Calgarians as they received the official White Hats of Calgary.

During the Annual General Meeting, WOCCU's delegates elected a new chairman and swore in a new board of directors. Melvin Edwards, representing the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions, is the first WOCCU chairman from the Caribbean.

The first day's general session showed participants the power of the credit union movement and the effect it's

having worldwide. Through a live video feed, the audience met WOCCU and local credit union staff in Afghanistan. The team explained how they establish credit unions while teaching new members about democracy, yet still complying with Islamic lending principles.

The crowd remained silent as keynote speaker Stephen Lewis explained his work as former U.N. Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. The former Canadian politician spoke honestly and passionately about the AIDS pandemic and the important role credit unions play in mitigating its impact.

"What World Council has the capacity to do is to intervene in this world where others haven't," Lewis told the general session audience. "You have a network which transcends all networks of the world."

In the final day's Awards Ceremony, WOCCU honored two Distinguished Service Award (DSA) recipients. L.R. (Bobby) McVeigh, CUCU board member and former WOCCU board member/chairman, and the Foundation for Polish Credit Unions were awarded WOCCU's highest honor for their contributions to the global credit union movement. Five WYCUP winners, who received fully paid trips to the next World Credit Union Conference in Hong Kong in July 2008, were also recognized.

In true Calgary fashion, the conference came to a close with a live rodeo at Stampede Park. Attendees enjoyed watching bull riding and kicked up their heels for dinner and dancing, an exciting end to an equally exciting event. ■

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To register for the next conference, visit www.woccu.org/hongkong.

