

MMCCU's New Managing Director

We at CMA welcome Karen Miner, and look forward to sharing more of her vision and insights during this important year for co-op and credit union leaders and members, and for all life on Earth.

The words *sustainable* or *sustainability* occur 28 times in a resume of Karen Miner's work experience and commitment to organizations whose mission she shares.

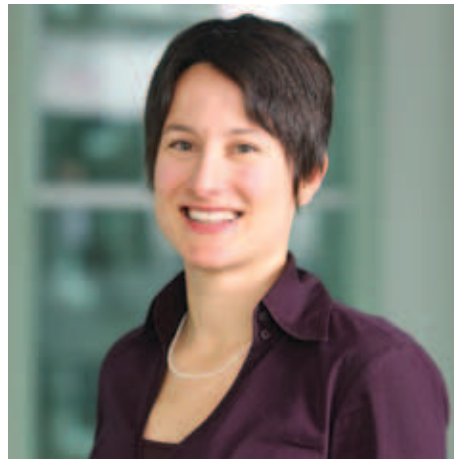
From her early involvement in fair trade and corporate social responsibility to her current work on the boards of directors of such organizations as Mountain Equipment Co-op and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, she has clearly thought a lot about the concept.

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“Sustainability means different things to different people. From my perspective, it is about taking responsibility over the long-term for people, the planet, and profits. But, its application is often quite context specific,” she says.

In her view, it is important that co-ops are financially stable and that they embrace a wide range of social and environmental responsibilities. For example, ethical sourcing, environmental footprint reduction, community engagement, and having a climate change strategy should not be viewed as being in competition with a co-op's need to be financially solvent.



“Different co-op sectors need to focus their efforts in the areas that are most relevant to them, where they can have the most impact and influence,” Miner points out, citing as an example the vulnerability of the insurance industry to climate change.

At the annual Canadian Co-operative Association Congress in June, 2011, Miner mentioned to MMCCU faculty member Sonja Novkovic that she was interested in getting even more involved with co-operatives. “I had imagined a career shift for me might have been to find a position in a particular co-op,” she recalled, but the news that Tom Webb, MMCCU's founding program manager, was retiring in 2012, intrigued her.

“For some time I had been looking for ways to become more active again in the academic sphere,” Miner explains. The MMCCU program's focus on helping co-op and credit union managers build practical skills “on the job” was a big draw.

Her education and experience in business management, governance, systems thinking and corporate responsibility have proved invaluable to Miner in her own career, and she is looking forward to the opportunity to put her expertise to work as MMCCU's Managing Director. As an inveterate committeewoman, she is enthusiastic about the work getting under way by the program's “parent,” the Co-operative Management Education Co-op (CMEC, see p.7).

One aspect Karen Miner relishes is the international nature of the program. She has traveled and worked abroad and across North America (she holds dual Canadian-United States citizenship and, in addition to English, speaks some French and Spanish), and she welcomes opportunities to build relationships worldwide, and to be part of a global network of colleagues.

“I'm lucky to be starting in this position in the International Year of Co-operatives given the enhanced opportunities for collaborations and the many exciting events that will occur. I truly believe that the MMCCU program has a lot of potential. Where can it go from here?”

Back in Nova Scotia where she grew up, and where the 100 percent Fair Trade Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op inspired her with its social and environmental leadership, Karen Miner is preparing to take an active role in answering that question. She assumes the Managing Director position on February 27, 2012.

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