

Power in Rural Alberta The Struggle for Control of the Regulatory Environment

The Hartley and Margaret Fredeen Scholarship in Co-operative Studies Seminar

Eric Neudorf
MPP, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
Policy Analyst, Employment and Social Development Canada

The economic literature on co-operatives focuses largely on the difference between the decisions made by co-ops and investor-owned firms (IOF) in areas such as pricing, output, quality, and R&D. Some studies compare IOFs and co-ops that operate independently, while others examine the decisions made when they compete in the same industry. The underlying assumption is always that the regulatory environment is neutral and does not advantage either organizational form.

This presentation tells a story about co-operative–IOF competition where the regulatory environment was not neutral — i.e., in the development of legislation governing co-operative Rural Electrification Associations in Alberta in the 1940s. The paper shows how regulations have developed over time so as to shift the competitive advantage to investor-owned utilities. Eric will also discuss the efforts of both IOFs and co-operatives to influence these changes.



Eric is a policy analyst with Employment and Social Development Canada. He received his Master's of Public Policy from the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School at the University of Saskatchewan. Before he studied public policy, Eric worked as a public school teacher in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He has completed undergraduate degrees in Education (U of S) and Biblical Studies (Briercrest), and continues to have broad research interests ranging from co-operative studies and behavioural economics to church history and textual criticism.

Thursday, 15 December 2016, 3:30–4:30 pm
Prairie Room, Diefenbaker Building, U of S Campus
Light refreshments to follow in the River Room

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