

# **Vancouver's Co-Working Co-op Stimulates Worker Empowerment**

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, March 28, 2015

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holding our Inception Meeting for a new kind of co-working space in Vancouver, one structured as a co-op.

You can read about the project in [The Georgia Straight piece last week](#), and on the [project webpage at Incipe](#), the consulting workers' co-op that is spawning this co-op. Incipe, *in-CHEE-pay*, is Latin for "Begin!" And you can [register for the \[free\] meeting here](#). And if you want to be involved and informed, you can [sign up for the e-newsletter](#) here.

We will be starting forming the community of people eager to take part in a new way of doing co-working, as equal owners of the whole enterprise instead of clients of for-profit corporate co-working spaces, which are how most of the world's co-working spaces are run.

But considering the fact that people who work, study, think, research, and volunteer from home are often disempowered and vulnerable, they need support.

So they gravitate to co-working spaces because of possibilities of serendipity and synergy and connecting with people to envision greatness with, over coffee. Because trying to do that in a Starbucks has a slim chance of much success.

But one of the key principles of co-working is to build community. And why do we have communities? To support each other.

And, it turns out, co-ops are all about building community and supporting each other in democratic workplaces within an intentional progressive economic climate.

So there's a natural fit to building a co-working space that is a co-op. And it's also natural to convene the space for people who understand this, to get to know one another and start building the community so that we can all assess our collective needs, desires, dreams, visions and capacity for mutual aid and support.

From this, we will do the heavy lifting to find our co-working space.

So, consider how precarious work has become for so many people!

It has been a rough couple generations for working people, with a notable increase in precariousness of work.

Downsizing, contracting out, layoffs, people in the middle of their working lives being flung through the windows of corporate towers only to have a difficult time finding work because employers may prefer to hire much younger people.

And while many people choose the freelance, contractor, entrepreneur consultant lifestyle, many people who've been canned are forced into fending for themselves, trying to leverage their skills, training and experience into something useful. They are one form of the precariat: the precarious proletariat.

Others in the precariat class include young people who typically can't get work in their fields they have trained in, or find corporate or organizational structures grotesquely tyrannical and impediments to

optimizing their work-life-activism elements of existence. They end up being precariats too. Our Incipe consulting co-op itself formed out of this very dynamic!

So our goals in creating a co-working co-op space include these:

1. Helping people work outside their homes.
2. Helping people have meaningful ownership.
3. Helping people feel some community in their labouring.
4. Helping people connect with others who can build synergy with each other.

But one of the most important goals in this whole project is to recognize that workers are disempowered, disconnected and devalued. And to fix that, we need to build support networks for people. And one of the ways to do that is to build a co-working space that is co-operatively owned, just like MEC or your credit union or Modo or other small and massive co-ops around the world.

So, scroll back up to see the links to getting more information about our co-working space in development. Get involved, because we need you and your originality!

And whether you need a 24/7 space or a desk away from home for a few hours each week that costs about as much as the coffee you need to buy to camp out on Starbucks' wifi, this ownership model is for you.

Remember, co-working is about empowerment. And so are co-ops!