

Westlock Grain Terminals

A Case Study

Written by Paul Cabaj, Canadian Centre for Community Renewal
Mike Gismondi, Athabasca University
Richard Stringham, Alberta Community and Co-operative Association
Darren Wood, Co-operative Intern, Keep Edmonton Original



Sponsors



- *The Westlock Grain Terminals is a very successful New Generation Co-operative located in Westlock, Alberta. In 2002, when the community found out that their grain terminal was going to be sold, they rallied together to raise more than \$1.2 million to purchase the terminal as a community owned venture. Since then, the Co-op has paid healthy dividend, on its shares to members and investors every year and are following through on plans to continually expand their grain handling capacity. Its success was a result of the vision and dedication of a small group of farmers, with the support of some key individuals, and, as with any new venture, a little bit of luck. The experience of Westlock Terminals has lessons to offer to any community faced with the loss of a major economic asset.*

- Tenacious leader integrity of founding members
- how much you want this co-op.
- Identify what you know and, more importantly, what you don't know about your business.
- Examine opportunities for alliances with other businesses and co-operatives if it builds the business case.
- Tour other community-owned initiatives.
- Get an independent party to evaluate the business opportunity.
- Set a reasonable timeline
- Board should sell shares to gain community support.
- Identify businesses in the community that will be impacted by the success or failure
- Be astute of legal advice about co-ops.
- Hire competent, experienced, and motivated management