

# Newsbriefs

MANITOBA EDITION Spring 2005 – Volume 6, No. 1



## Co-ops without government

Bluestem shows how it's done

**B**luestem Housing Co-operative is named after a prairie grass with deep roots that allow it to survive fires and grazing animals. And that, says founding member **Kerniel Aasland**, is the image a group of friends had in mind in 1996 when they set out to form a co-op without government funding.

“We were a group of friends who wanted to live in the same building but wanted a structure that was more than that. We looked at different options and the co-op model seemed closest to the kind of community we had in mind.”

They set out to purchase a six-unit apartment building. The co-op was able to borrow 100 percent of the financing. Each member was required to loan the co-op \$3,000 and to purchase 500 shares at a dollar each. They used the member loans to attract a backer who [2] ►

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### Dollars and sense

Co-op Cost Cutters offers great deals for CHF Canada members. Find out what it can do for your co-op.

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◀ [cover]

was willing to offer a small loan as a second mortgage. Those funds were then used as a down-payment on the building and to qualify for a mortgage with the credit union.

Bluestem is not an equity co-op. They are now incorporated as a non-profit co-op and the original member loans were quickly paid back. While the co-op does not have access to subsidies, they have managed to keep housing charges affordable. "Each unit pays a flat rate per month," Aasland says. "We set that rate at what was needed to keep the building running and to build reserves." He says housing charges that were originally at market are now about 20 percent below market for their area.

Bluestem first became aware of CHF Canada when Aasland participated in a forum about co-op housing held in Winnipeg last December. There, he met co-op members talking about CHF Canada and why it was important to belong. In addition to the chance to be connected to the larger co-op community, Bluestem found CHF Canada's insurance coverage and group buying programs very appealing.

Co-ops looking at ways to add new units should find some ideas in Bluestem's innovative approach to development without government funding.

Welcome to our newest Manitoba member. ☺

## Co-op Cost Cutters program offers great deals for members

### Suppliers

#### ICI Paints

Dane Lawrence  
1-800-387-7311 ext. 4

#### Grand & Toy

Carlos Carvalho  
1-800-478-9405 ext. 6344  
carvalhc@grandtoy.com

#### Home Depot Supply

Bob Jackson  
1-800-782-0557

#### Phelps Laundry Equipment

Gary Panagiotidis  
1-866-557-5599

#### Rent Check

Chandra Vedanayakam  
1-800-661-7312 ext. 228  
Chandra@rentcheckcorp.com

**B**elonging to CHF Canada can help co-ops and co-op members save money. We work hard to harness the buying power of housing co-ops and by participating in our Co-op Cost Cutters group purchasing program members can save money! And, as more co-ops use their collective buying power, Co-op Cost Cutters gets better and better! Co-op Cost Cutters is a group purchasing program that offers Manitoba member housing co-ops the ability to pool their buying power with over 35,000 housing co-op units in Ontario. Member co-ops save money on maintenance supplies, electrical, plumbing and cleaning supplies, appliance parts, flooring, carpets, tile, paint and wall coverings, office supplies and furnishings, the purchase or leasing of appliances, and credit reports and checks.

In 2005, we have a new and improved price for paper with **Grand & Toy**. Order by phone, fax, email or online at [www.grandandtoy.com](http://www.grandandtoy.com). [3] ▶





Pooling buying power to harness better deals and services for members, Nick Sidor, Corporate Affairs Director for CHF Canada, reinforces the value of membership at a recent meeting in Winnipeg.



If you are using Equifax, you are paying too much! Get credit reports from **Rent Check** for \$7 and no yearly membership fee! There is also no minimum monthly charge with Rent Check. Co-ops can now report when a member leaves owing money. By using the Member Reporting Form to report such arrears, you warn other co-ops of similar risk.

Look for the lighting special that can save \$38 per bulb per year! **Home Depot Supply** is a one-stop source for electrical, plumbing, hardware, cleaning, tools and other building maintenance supplies. Order from the catalogue by fax, phone or online and get wholesale prices plus an additional discount on every catalogue item. You won't find these prices at the Home Depot stores!

Whether you lease or buy laundry equipment, **Phelps** offers great deals on both. Their washing machines use 60% less electricity and 40% less water – and members use less detergent.

**ICI Paints** offers a special on paint that covers stubborn stains like smoke, nicotine, water damage and grease – plus low fumes. This paint has been especially useful for members who are environmentally sensitive. Order 10 gallons or more and get free delivery!

These are just some of the great deals with Co-op Cost Cutters. The research has been done, the deals negotiated and extras included. Co-op Cost Cutters aims to provide the best prices, quality and customer support. In many cases, these same deals are also available to co-op staff.

For further information on the program, contact **Jocelyn Peifer Ross** at 1-888-591-3301 or at 989-5963. Or you can contact **Miriam Wohl**, the program co-ordinator at [miriam@coophousing.com](mailto:miriam@coophousing.com). ☎

## events

### Here's an education event you won't want to miss!

What makes for a well-run co-op? Many times it's the skill and knowledge of the board, members and the staff. Come and learn about good governance and find out how other co-ops are dealing with current issues. We'll have workshops on:

- Evaluating your board
- Building your Community
- Good management
- Co-op finances
- Dealing with conflict

Mark Saturday, **October 15**, 2005 on your calendar now! We'll be sending posters to your co-op soon. Then, closer to the event we'll send out more detailed information with registration forms, workshop descriptions, location and cost. Come share, learn and have fun with others from across the province!

Questions? Contact **Jocelyn Peifer Ross** at 989-5963 in Winnipeg or toll free at 1-888-591-3301.

### CHF Canada AGM – Why you'll want to be there

Plan to attend the CHF Canada AGM in Edmonton, **June 16-18**, where you'll find lots that's new for 2005. You'll also have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to listen to humanitarian and Macleans magazine's 2003 Canadian of the Year, Stephen Lewis, who will be our guest speaker at the national business meeting. And, for the first time ever, you can register online!

Registration packages have already been sent to all CHF Canada member housing co-ops. You can also find more information online at [www.chfc.coop/agm2005](http://www.chfc.coop/agm2005) and in the national edition of *Newsbriefs*.

On the cover and inset:  
Picture perfect views of  
Bluestem Housing Co-op in  
Winnipeg.



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## Who's who at CHF Canada?

We have five offices across the country to service our members. Sometimes your co-op will need advice or guidance on a specific concern or service. Here's a list of who to contact:

To get an insurance quote for your co-op – contact **Louise Briglio** at 1-800-465-2752 ext. 224. For other insurance inquiries or concerns – contact **Linda Stephenson** at 1-800-465-2752 ext. 234.

If your co-op is having trouble paying your bills on time and you think it may be in difficulty – contact **Karla Skoutajan** at 1-800-465-2752 ext. 241.

If your co-op is celebrating an anniversary – contact **Pat McClain** at 1-877-533-2667 ext. 121.

If your co-op wants to submit a resolution to a CHF Canada annual general meeting – contact **Nick Sidor** at 1-800-465-2752 ext. 231.

If your co-op wants someone to attend a meeting or give a workshop at your co-op – contact **Jocelyn Peifer Ross** at 1-888-591-3301.

You can also check out our website at [www.chfc.coop](http://www.chfc.coop) for further information on CHF Canada.

## Securing your co-op community

Are you worried about safety in your co-op? *Securing Co-op Communities* is a new CHF Canada publication available in the Members' Network section of the website. It includes information and checklists that boards, committees and management can use to improve security in their co-op.

To access the publication, go to [www.chfc.coop](http://www.chfc.coop) and click on the Members' Network. Then click on Resources. You'll find this publication under the section for co-op staff.

If you haven't visited the Members' Network before, you will have to register and pick a password before entering the Network area.

## Ontario co-ops need your help

"We want our co-ops back!" That's what members of Ontario-program co-ops are saying as they work to change the legislation that controls how their co-ops operate.

And they're looking for help from co-ops in other provinces. At CHF Canada's 2004 annual meeting members voted to support Ontario co-ops in their campaign. Now, CHF Canada is asking co-ops outside Ontario to donate to a campaign fund. Watch for a letter arriving at your co-op soon.

When you receive the letter, please donate to the 'Fix the SHRA' Fund. The fund will be used to help Ontario provincial co-ops in their campaign to get the Ontario government to give our Ontario members their co-ops back.

For more information, visit our website at [www.chfc.coop](http://www.chfc.coop) or call **Harvey Cooper** (toll-free) at 1-800-268-2537, ext.237.