



NATIONAL EDITION

Newsbriefs

Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3, JULY 1999

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Housing, homelessness, lobbying highlight Newfoundland AGM

A record number of voting delegates attended the 1999 annual meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland. Co-op members at the AGM talked about the problem of homelessness and the need for a new national co-op housing program. The AGM also gave members a chance to hear about housing problems outside of Canada, thanks to Rooftops Canada, the co-op housing sector's international development arm. Delegates got an update on the national lobby campaign, hearing from key volunteers in each region about the fight to protect the future of housing co-ops. Look for complete AGM coverage in the insert included with this issue. ★

Group benefits program for members

CHF Canada is about to launch a new group benefits program for members. The program will provide medical, dental and life insurance benefits for members of housing co-ops that belong to CHF Canada. Members can get basic life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and drug, hospital, vision care, and other health benefits. There is an optional dental package.

The buying power of CHF Canada means that we are able to offer this coverage at a reasonable cost to anyone who is under 65 and living in a member co-op. Retired staff of member co-ops also qualify. "Members called for this program at the 1998 annual meeting," said CHF Canada president **Wes Hosler**. "We're excited to add even more value to their membership." For more information, contact your co-op's co-ordinator or property manager, or call Morneau Sobeco at 1-800-267-0097 and ask for CHF Canada's Co-op Member Plan. ★

B.C. government helps leaky co-ops

British Columbia co-op members in leaky buildings were ecstatic to learn on April 24 that the provincial government is willing to help them out.

Jenny Kwan, B.C. Minister of Municipal Affairs, told co-op members that they could have the same access to the reconstruction loan program that condo owners have. The province has made interest-free loans available to owners of leaky buildings who don't have access to other sources of funding for building repair.

The announcement was made at Paloma housing co-op in Vancouver. The minister and representatives of the media got to see first-hand the damage that had been caused by leaks at that co-op. Balconies were shored up with boards, holding them in place after their supports had rotted completely away. Co-op members talked about mould, mildew, and even mushrooms growing in their units and the health problems this caused.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C. has been working closely with the co-ops that have suffered water damage. The total amount of the damage is still being assessed but at least 30 and possibly more co-ops are affected.

CHF/BC director **Ian McMeekin** was happy with the B.C. government decision. He said access to the fund will make a real difference in co-ops' ability to deal with the repairs quickly.

B.C. co-op members are disappointed that the federal government has not yet agreed to match the province's contribution. The federal government has made loans available to owners of leaky buildings, but only at the market rate. However, at a meeting put on by CHF/BC and the B.C. Homeowner Protection Office, a CMHC representative announced a simplified process for approval of loans, increased subsidy to co-ops not able to pay for repairs and the appointment of two staff dedicated to dealing with leaky buildings. ★

Information for Co-ops

Y2K

There will be a Y2K insert in every issue for the rest of the year. The insert will contain the latest news about the Y2K situation, and more resources as we produce them. Look for this information on our web site as well. ★

Operating agreement rules on gifts and donations

Housing co-ops often want to give money to a good cause. That could mean a donation to Rooftops Canada, or to a local community project. Or co-ops may wish to give a gift to a special member or to an employee.

If your co-op has an operating agreement with CMHC or a province, you need to know what that agreement says about gifts and donations. We'll tell you below about the rules in the most common agreements.

CMHC operating agreements

The operating agreement for the CMHC **Section 61 (formerly 34.18) Program** doesn't place any

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NATIONAL EDITION

Published by

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restrictions on co-op gifts and donations. That makes sense because these co-ops do not get an ongoing operating subsidy from CMHC.

The **Section 95 (56.1) Program** operating agreement says that co-ops can't lend or give away any project funds without CMHC approval. So, unless you have CMHC approval, gifts and donations are not eligible operating expenses. But in practice, CMHC has not objected to small gifts or donations to charities, to volunteers, or to members who are sick or who have lost one of the family.

The **Federal Co-op Housing Program** (also known as the ILM Program) has a slightly broader rule. There, the operating agreement says that co-ops can't give away any funds generated from project revenues, except for "reasonable" gifts or donations. Small gifts to members have been accepted in the same way as for Section 95 co-ops. Reasonable donations to Rooftops Canada and local community projects have also not been questioned.

Provincial program rules

If your co-op signed an agreement with CMHC but the province now administers the agreement, the rules above still apply.

The operating agreements under the Ontario provincial programs contain the same kind of limit on gifts and donations as the CMHC Section 95 agreements.

British Columbia's **Homes BC Program** restricts the sort of things Homes BC co-ops can include in their budgets to project operating costs, which do not include gifts and donations.

There are two unilateral provincial coop programs in Quebec: the Programme intégré québécois and the Programme Accès Logis. There are no restrictions on types of expenditures in either program but there are standards for budget lines in the Programme Accès Logis and these should be checked before making a gift or donation from operating funds. There is also a federal/provincial program in Quebec (PSBLP) which does have tight budgeting restrictions. Gifts or donations

have to be charged to the community activities budget category, which is very limited.

Is there another way to make a gift or donation?

So how can your co-op make gifts and donations without having to get the government's permission? By making sure you have enough non-subsidized revenue to cover it.

Here are some examples of non-subsidized revenue:

- interest earned on member shares, loans or deposits that is not paid to the members
- non-refundable member application fees
- money raised from social events
- penalties paid by members, such as late payment fines.

CHF Canada's technical bulletin "Ineligible Expenses in Federal Co-op Programs" has a fuller description of non-subsidized co-op revenues. We wrote the guide for co-ops who have operating agreements with CMHC. But the advice on non-subsidized revenue applies just as well to co-ops with provincial agreements. Call us at 1-800-465-2752 to get a copy of this useful guide. ★

Battle of Beech Hall now on video

Twenty years ago, a group of senior citizens fought to save their homes from demolition that would make way for big development.

Politicians soon discovered that it would take more than an eviction to get rid of the senior citizens of Beech Hall.

Watch this video and weep and cheer for the people who were displaced, the strength of the seniors and ultimately for their success in this timeless battle.

Twenty years later, the fight for affordable housing continues. This is a piece of co-op housing history that is as relevant today as it was twenty years ago.

The video regularly sells for \$30, now on sale for \$20 until July 31.

see [Battle of Beech Hall](#) on page 4

Contact:

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Fighting the Good Fight

**Federal lobby campaign targets
B.C., Alberta, PEI**

Housing co-op members in B.C., Alberta and PEI are thrilled that all three provinces have agreed that they do not wish to include co-operative housing programs in any deals to transfer federal co-op programs to their administration.

Alberta Minister of Municipal Affairs **Iris Evans**, was the latest provincial minister to write to **Alfonso Gagliano**, federal Minister Responsible for CMHC. In her letter, she says, "As you are aware, the federal government's proposal to transfer co-operatives to the provinces has been of great concern to the members of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada as well as to their members....Many members of Alberta's co-operatives expressed their concerns to me in writing. In view of their concerns and the federal government's recent announcement regarding Ontario's co-operative housing, the Province of Alberta requests that if we decide to negotiate a new social housing agreement, the co-operative housing programs would be excluded from our discussions."

Joanne Mick, executive director of the Southern Alberta Co-operative Housing Association (SACHA), immediately wrote to thank Evans and **Premier Ralph Klein** for their support of co-op efforts.

CHF Canada has been fighting for the past three years to stop the transfer of federal housing co-operative programs to provincial administration.

Almost 90 per cent of housing co-ops in Canada are still under federal administration. Since the January announcement that federal co-operatives in Ontario would be pulled out of the proposed transfer to the province, housing co-ops in B.C. have been pushing minister Gagliano to issue a formal media statement that that province's co-ops will be excluded from any transfer agreements.

Vancouver East MP **Libby Davies**, who has 33 co-ops in her riding, asked minister Gagliano a question about co-op housing in Parliament on May 10.

Minister Gagliano replied, "Mr. Speaker, the announcement we have made on co-ops in Ontario applies to the other provinces and we will deal with it every time we negotiate with the provinces. I assume in the case of British Columbia as soon as negotiations start we will definitely discuss it. The same arrangements that were given to the Ontario co-ops definitely can be offered to the British Columbia co-ops."

B.C. co-ops have been frustrated that the Minister seems to be treating their co-ops differently by tying them to the start of negotiations and not simply making the same announcement he made for Ontario federal co-ops. They are expressing that frustration to their local MPs through faxes, letters and meetings.

Meanwhile, co-ops in Manitoba are pushing their provincial government to return co-operative housing programs to the federal government.

Some co-ops have been surprised to receive a letter from an executive assistant to Minister Gagliano, stating, "...the creation of a new agency to manage co-operative housing is not under consideration." This contradicts statements the Minister himself has made, as well as statements from a number of MPs. In fact, Minister Gagliano wrote to us recently, saying, "If a national body is considered to be a viable and appropriate model for administering co-operative housing projects, provinces and territories will have the option of transferring the administration of co-operative housing to the new body."

For more information on the federal lobby campaign, contact CHF Canada for the name of your local lobby co-ordinator. ★

NHA amendments could reduce affordable housing

CHF Canada representatives made a submission on April 13 to the Standing Committee of Parliament dealing with Bill C-66, a bill to amend the National Housing Act and the CMHC Act. A presentation was also made on June 2 to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. We expressed concerns that the changes could stop the federal government from taking action to solve Canada's housing needs, now or in the future.

The briefs, presented by **Laird Hunter**, our legal counsel, talked about our fear that the changes would allow CMHC to waive the non-profit objectives now included in the National Housing Act. CHF Canada also expressed a concern about devolution of housing programs to the provinces. Hunter said that the federal government seems to be offering the provinces a mandate to alter the rules for existing housing projects, so long as the provinces spend federal dollars on "low-income housing."

CHF Canada praised the bill's proposals to strengthen Canada's residential mortgage insurance system, while stressing the need for 100 per cent insurance on mortgages for affordable housing. The paper also supported the government's intention to strengthen CMHC's international role. It expressed the hope that CMHC would work with Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to build more affordable housing in developing countries.

Our briefs were well received, but the bill was passed by both the Commons and the Senate.

For more information, contact **George Devine** at our national office 1-800-465-2752 (e-mail gdevine@chfc.ca). ★

Serving Our Members

News on long-distance discounts

In late May, ACC Tel Enterprises was bought by AT&T Canada. ACC was CHF Canada's partner in providing long distance telephone discounts and new Internet services to co-op members.

Just before our AGM in St. John's, AT&T reached an agreement with a new company, Primus, to handle residential affinity programs like CHF Canada's.

Primus is a big company that specializes in programs like ours. Although they are new to Canada, we've checked them out and we think they are our best choice to continue the long distance program and to connect our members to the Internet.

Most of the staff at ACC who are familiar with housing co-ops will be staying with Primus. We'll be re-launching our long distance discount program later this summer. Stay tuned. ★

Thank you to Health Canada

Health Canada told us in March that they had approved our grant for work on seniors issues in housing co-ops. The total amount of the grant is \$80,500. The grant will allow us to do several things:

- understand issues in "seniors only" co-ops – both for seniors and the co-op
- develop a model to help "seniors only" co-ops stay viable as their members get older
- develop guidelines to help co-ops deal with the issue of dementia.

We will be holding focus groups with both "seniors only" and "mixed age" co-ops across the country as part of the project. We will be working closely with the Alzheimer Society of Canada on the part of the project related to dementia.

see **Thank you to Health Canada** on page 6

We expect to complete the project towards the end of the year 2000. At the end of the project, CHF Canada will have several new resources:

- a guide that presents a model for “seniors only” co-ops
- guidelines and a model policy for dealing with dementia among co-op members (both in “seniors only” and “mixed age” co-ops)

Watch for workshops at the 2000 AGM on this project! ★

Community Economic Development

Does your co-op have members who are unemployed? Are they interested in working together to get training, start a business or create jobs? If they are, they may be interested in getting involved in a pilot project in community economic development (CED).

CED is a community-based way to build self-reliance in communities experiencing unemployment and poverty. It helps people work together, start community businesses, create jobs and get control over their local economy and lives.

Recently CHF Canada received funding from the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) at Carleton University, to help housing co-ops work on community economic development (CED) projects. We're inviting member co-ops to work with CEDTAP to develop projects that will benefit their members. Funding is still available for two projects.

The project consultants will help co-ops with their CED project such as writing a business plan, marketing, networking and getting start-up capital. Please contact us if your co-op has an idea for a project. Previous CED experience would be helpful. Funding is limited and will only cover 80% of the cost of the technical assistance for the project. The co-op must pay the rest.

Are you interested? For more information, contact **Karla Skoutajan** at 1(800) 465-2752 (in Ottawa 230-2231). ★

Fund helps start up new affordable housing

CHF Canada has approved funding requests from three members that are working on developing new affordable housing.

Don Area Co-operative Homes received funding for a feasibility study for an infill project. Muriel Collins Housing Co-operative is working on a second phase of a their co-op on federally owned land, with the goal of providing secure, affordable housing for women leaving abusive relationships. Sundance co-op in Edmonton is hoping to build a new phase of their co-op for seniors, on land immediately next to their existing housing.

Each of the grants was for \$1500. The Board has set aside \$8,000 from this year's budget to give to members with innovative ideas for new affordable housing.

The grants are to cover such costs as incorporation fees, feasibility studies, environmental audits, preliminary zoning and planning investigations, and other costs associated with the early stages of project development.

To find out more, contact **Mark Goldblatt** at our national office 1-800-465-2752 (e-mail mgoldblatt@chfc.ca). ★

Support for federations

At the 1998 annual general meeting, members asked us to look at ways CHF Canada could provide support for local federations. Over the past year we have followed up by working on new sector membership agreements in some areas. We've also pursued joint recruitment programs with federations and regularly covered federation achievements and events in Newsbriefs and other publications.

One way housing co-ops can support this work is to put a commitment to their local federation right in their by-laws.

A sample by-law might say, “The co-op will belong to both the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and (the local) federation. If there is ever a resolution to remove this clause from the by-laws, a representative from both CHF Canada and (the local) federation will be invited to attend a meeting and speak to that resolution.” ★

Member loyalty pays off

CHF Canada has received a cheque for \$158,000 in recognition of the value of its commercial programs with The Co-operators. This payment is the first in The Co-operators new member loyalty program. The program rewards members of The Co-operators who do business with one of the companies in The Co-operators Group. CHF Canada sponsors six different group insurance programs with The Co-operators, serving in total more than 750 housing co-ops, 700 co-op staff and almost 9,000 co-op households with property, vehicle, personal and group benefits insurance.

“This proves that the principle of co-operation among co-operatives works,” says **Thom Armstrong**, Director of Corporate Affairs. “Members can be sure that we’ll put this money to good use defending their interests and developing even more services that add value to their membership in CHF Canada.” ★

People and Places

CHFT celebrates 25 years

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto celebrated its 25th anniversary at the AGM on April 27. The meeting was held at Toronto City Hall. The city named the date Co-op Housing Day and flew the co-op flag outside City Hall.

The keynote speaker was **Bill Graham**, MP for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Graham, who represents more co-ops than any other MP in Canada, has been a key supporter in the fight to stop the transfer of Ontario federal co-ops to the province.

Delegates at the AGM saw a new video version of the Battle of Beech Hall, a 20-year-old film about the fight by a group of seniors to save their homes and form a co-op. The film was produced and directed by CHF Canada’s **Christopher Wilson**. CHF/T presented a copy of the video to **Jean Doidge**, a long-time member of the co-op.

The federation announced two new initiatives at the AGM. The first is the Here to Stay fund, a rent bank for co-op members who find themselves with financial problems. The fund was created so that co-op members would not lose their homes because of housing charge arrears. The plan offers loans to co-op members, credit counselling and debt consolidation program.

CHF/T is now opening their own computer training centre. **Tom Clement**, executive director, says the federation has been operating a job training program for co-op members for the past two years. Over 50 employers have hired graduates of the program.

Another feature of the AGM was the announcement of two \$1500 grants to member groups that are undertaking initiatives to develop new housing. The funds were matched by CHF Canada. ★

Goodbye to Danielle Cécile

We are sad to announce that **Danielle Cécile** has left after 11 years with CHF Canada. She became Executive Director of the Federal Co-operative Housing Stabilization Fund in July.

Danielle started her co-operative housing career as founding member, co-ordinator and project officer of the resource group GRT du Sud-Ouest in Valleyfield, Québec. She was responsible for the development of 16 housing projects. In 1987 she became Co-ordinator of the Fédération des coopératives d’habitation montréalaises in Longueuil. She joined CHF Canada in 1988 and assumed the position of Director, Sector Development in 1991.

see **Goodbye to Danielle Cécile** on page 8

In 1995, Danielle was awarded the prestigious “Ordre du mérite coopératif canadien” for exceptional contribution to the co-operative sector in Canada.

Danielle is replacing **Jean-Yves Lord**, who is leaving the Stabilization Fund after nine years as its first Executive Director.

Jean-Yves has founded Le groupe *Axiome Coaching* Group, a company offering professional coaching to executives, individuals and teams interested in improving their performance. ★

Welcome, Nick

Nick Sidor, an Ottawa-based consultant will be working as Project Manager, Commercial Services from now until December. Nick is a former president of the Ontario Council. Call Nick at 1-800-465-2752 if you want to talk about CHF Canada’s group buying services. ★

Quebec federations focus on planning at AGM

CQCH (Confédération québécoise des coopératives d’habitation) held its annual meeting May 14-16. CQCH is a confederation of the eight federations of housing co-ops in Quebec. Over 50 co-op members and guests participated in the event. There were workshops on Friday evening and Saturday, followed by the business meeting Sunday.

The Friday evening session looked at the history and structure of the co-op housing movement in Quebec. On Saturday there was training for board members of federations – both on board functioning and how to carry out a self-evaluation of the federation. Another workshop, with CMHC staff in attendance, discussed some of the ongoing issues between the co-op housing movement and CMHC in Quebec. The evening was a novel way to do some long term planning – a role play on CQCH in the year 2004!

Fortunately, the Quebec government is still funding new co-operative housing. The Sunday business meeting heard presentations on new housing initiatives. There was a presentation on the Quebec co-op program, AccèsLogis, an acquisition-rehabilitation program for developing more co-ops. The Conseil coopératif du Québec also talked about their housing initiatives. ★

Millennium project

CHF Canada has received a \$20,000 grant from the Millennium Bureau of Canada to help us produce a book on the history of co-operative housing in Canada. The group involved in completing the project will conduct interviews across the country to include personal stories about our co-op history.

CHF Canada kicked off a fundraising drive for this project at our annual general meeting. ★

The world’s co-ops come to Canada

Canada will be hosting the International Co-operative Alliance at the world congress August 29 to September 1 in Quebec City. The ICA’s world congress is held every four years in a different location. This is the first time they have met in North America.

Youth participation in the congress is a priority this year. The target age for youth participants is 18-30 years old and participants should be selected on the basis of their involvement in co-operatives. For information on the financing, selection and registration of Canadian youth, please contact **Nial Kuyek** or **Cindy Murray** at the Canadian Co-operative Association, (613) 238-6711.

The ICA, founded in London in 1895 is an organization that represents co-operatives from all regions of the world. It has more than 242 member organizations from over 100 countries. Those co-operatives represent over 725 million members.

The congress will include meetings of the ICA Housing committee. ★