



NATIONAL EDITION

# Newsbriefs

Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada

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## Co-ops pulled out of transfer to BC, Alberta and PEI

Housing co-ops in British Columbia, Alberta and Prince Edward Island are celebrating the announcement that co-ops in those provinces will not be transferred to provincial administration.

"This is great news," said **Gary Panagiotidis**, CHF Canada director and President of the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C. "Co-op members have been working for over two years to make sure their homes are protected. We're glad the federal government has been listening."

On October 17, the **Hon. Hedy Fry**, member of Parliament for Vancouver Centre, made the B.C. announcement on behalf of the **Hon. Alfonso Gagliano**, Minister Responsible for CMHC. She told

see **Co-ops pulled out** on page 2      see also **Transfer deal bad news** on page 2

## Section 95 clawback fight ends

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has put an end to the policy that has seen co-ops lose money through "clawbacks" — the withdrawal of subsidy from Section 95 (56.1) co-ops that have earned net operating revenue. In its place is a new approach that will leave net revenue where it is most needed—with the co-op. That has always been the bottom line for our Section 95 members.

This is a major development. As *Newsbriefs* readers will know, CHF Canada and our Section 95 members have been working hard to resolve the disagreement with CMHC over the treatment of net operating revenue. It seems our work has paid off. After any accumulated deficits have been taken care of, co-ops will now be able to use net revenue to:

- add to the subsidy surplus fund if the need is there
- help fund any special reserves negotiated with CMHC
- add to under-funded replacement reserves.

see **Section 95** on page 4

200 co-op members at the B.C. Co-op Housing Fair that “the administration of federally assisted housing will not be included in the social housing offer to the province of British Columbia... This is consistent with the treatment of unilateral federal housing co-operatives in Ontario, which Minister Gagliano announced in January.”

A week later, on October 24, **George Proud**, MP for Hillsborough, made the PEI announcement in Charlottetown at a co-op housing education conference. The Hon. **Anne McLellan**, MP for Edmonton West, brought the good news to Alberta co-ops on November 13 at a ceremony celebrating the successful renovation and financial restructuring of Integra Co-op in Edmonton.

“Thanks to the efforts of co-op members across the country, 90 percent of the federal co-op units in Canada are still under federal administration,” said **Debbie Saidman**, CHF Canada’s Alberta director. “This is the first step in achieving long-term protection for our homes.”

**Heather Paynter**, CHF Canada’s PEI director, said, “We’re glad the federal government has heard the voices of co-op members in Canada’s smallest province. We’re close to finding lasting security for our co-ops.”

Our next step is to move forward on our proposal for a new non-profit agency to administer co-op programs. Minister Gagliano has indicated that he is willing to sit down with the co-op sector if we can bring two or three provinces to the discussions as well. We hope to include some provinces where a social housing transfer is in place and provinces such as Ontario where there are provincially-funded co-ops. CHF Canada hopes to one day have all housing co-op programs administered by one national agency.

For more information on the proposed agency, or the national lobby campaign, contact any CHF Canada office for the name of your local lobby co-ordinator. ★

## Transfer deal bad news for Ontario co-ops: Provincial program reform now top priority

Ontario and Ottawa signed a social housing transfer agreement on November 17 that directly affects 21,000 provincial and Federal/Provincial co-op households. Funding and administration of all federal housing programs **except federal co-ops** has been handed over to the province. One day after the deal was signed, the Ontario government announced additional funding cuts to provincial co-op programs. “There’s no question that the signing is bad news for provincial co-ops,” says **Joyce Morris**, President of CHF Canada’s Ontario Council. “However, we’re far from being defeated.”

Federal co-ops in Ontario were taken out of the transfer deal in January following a determined campaign by co-ops. Federal co-ops won a second victory in November by securing long-term protection for three rent supplement programs which are to be transferred to the federal level.

The signing sets the stage for Ontario to complete the download of provincial housing programs (including co-ops) to municipalities. “The main priority for Ontario co-ops is to win positive reform to protect provincial co-ops,” says Morris.

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“We are also working to strengthen the relationship between co-ops and municipalities.” In addition, Ontario Region staff are meeting with federal officials to assess the possibility of uploading provincial co-ops to the federal level. “The plan has a lot going for it, but we need to make sure the federal government is committed before we decide how far we can go,” says Morris.

Please call **Michael Shapcott** or **Harvey Cooper** in the Ontario Region office of CHF Canada for more details at 1-800-268-2537 (in Toronto, call 416-366-1711). E-mail: [info@chfc.ca](mailto:info@chfc.ca). ★

## Serving Our Members

### Announcing **MemberTel™**

Affordable long distance and Internet for members

**B**y the time *NewsBriefs* readers see this article, co-op members across Canada should have received the first brochure describing MemberTel™, co-op housing’s new program for affordable Long Distance and Internet services.

“MemberTel,” says **Nick Sidor**, CHF Canada’s commercial services project manager, “is the newest program to pull together our buying power to save members money. The best thing is that it helps strengthen the co-op housing sector at the same time.”

MemberTel offers co-op members:

- affordable long distance, with a choice of two flexible plans
- big savings on international long distance rates
- no sign-up fees
- no monthly fees
- savings on unlimited Internet access for MemberTel long distance customers.

“What makes it special,” says Sidor, “is that a part of every MemberTel dollar is a direct contribution to the co-op housing sector. CHF Canada and federations will be using it to make the sector even stronger nationally and locally.”

MemberTel is a unique three-way partnership among CHF Canada, local federations, and Primus Canada, one of the world’s fastest-growing telecommunications companies. Primus Canada offers great customer service, and is on its way to becoming the top pick among Canada’s communications companies. Members of co-ops that belong to CHF Canada and to participating federations are eligible.

To sign up for MemberTel, call toll-free 1-877-885-9961. ★

### A new program for your co-op office telephones from CHF Canada

**C**o-ops in Canada pay a lot of money for their office telephone services. We deserve the best savings available, and CHF Canada is rolling together our group buying power to deliver them.

We have asked Canada’s six major telecommunications companies for proposals to supply business telephone services. The proposals will cover a full range of office phone services: local business lines, long distance, pagers and more.

“The companies have been asked to bid on the combined phone volumes of our member housing co-ops and the members of the Canadian Co-operative Association,” says CHF Canada’s **Thom Armstrong**. CCA’s members, he says, include large co-ops like Co-op Atlantic, Federated Co-operatives, Gay Lea Foods and Mountain Equipment Co-op.

“In the competitive telecommunications marketplace, with that combined purchasing power, we expect offers that will save member co-ops a lot of money,” says Armstrong.

So stay tuned. Discounts on all your office telephone services should be available through CHF Canada by early 2000. In the meantime, says Armstrong, member co-ops should think twice before signing long-term contracts with telephone companies. ★

There's more. If co-ops add net revenue to the replacement reserve (or to a special reserve) in addition to the annual reserve requirement, that amount can be available in the future to cover operating losses. Section 95 co-ops have always argued that net revenue might be needed for just that purpose. CHF Canada will be giving you all the details of the new CMHC policy in a special bulletin we're preparing. The bulletin will be going out soon to all our Section 95 member co-ops and the sector organizations that support them.

An important part of making this new arrangement work is replacement reserve planning. Co-ops can add net revenue to the replacement reserve to help meet long-term replacement requirements. But you need to know what those requirements are. That means getting replacement reserve plans in place and deciding how much money your co-op is going to need for major repairs and replacements in the future.

CMHC's replacement reserve guide already offers strong incentives for co-ops to do replacement reserve planning. Here at CHF Canada we are working on materials to help co-ops with the steps involved in creating a plan. We expect to have them ready in the new year. In the meantime, if you need advice with replacement reserve planning, don't hesitate to contact the CHF Canada office nearest you—or your local CMHC branch office. ★

## Matheson Heights happy to get funds back

**M**atheson Heights, the Vancouver co-op where the issue of "clawbacks" was first raised, has now received \$83,000 back from CMHC. At the beginning of 1998, CMHC started holding back subsidy from Matheson Heights every month, based on the belief that the co-op had net revenue it didn't need. After much hard work by the co-op, their management company Cana Management, and CHF Canada, CMHC paid all the money back. The co-op is now working on building up its replacement reserves. "It's been a hard fight," said Matheson Heights president **Ursula Brain**. "We're very happy with the results." ★

## Mark your calendars for the 2000 AGM

**D**on't forget... CHF Canada's next Annual General Meeting is being held in Ottawa during the week of May 17–21. Mark your calendars now for what promises to be a great millennium event! Ottawa's world-famous Tulip Festival is being held at the same time. The local committee is busy planning to make your stay one to remember. Look for the early notice sent out to your co-op in November, and plan to join us in Ottawa next spring for a "Capital" good time! ★

## Risk Underwriting Fund now covers energy retrofits

**C**HF Canada's Risk Underwriting Fund is now making loans to co-ops wanting to do fuel conversion projects or energy retrofits. While fuel conversion costs are usually greater than the limited loan guarantees available through the RUF, co-ops may borrow funds to cover part of the cost. Energy retrofit projects that would qualify for the loans include: conversion of electric hot water heaters to gas; purchase of energy-efficient appliances; energy-efficient lighting in common areas; attic insulation; window films; and conversion of electric dryers to gas.

For more information, contact **Nicholas Gazzard**, Director of Sector Development, at our Ottawa office. Call toll free 1-800-465-2752 (230-2201 in the Ottawa area) or e-mail [ngazzard@chfc.ca](mailto:ngazzard@chfc.ca). ★

## Federations Committee looks at best practices

**S**ome 40 federation staff and directors attended the annual meeting of the Federations Committee in Montreal from November 4–6.

The meeting featured a workshop on "best practices". At the end of the workshop, everyone agreed that federations and CHF Canada would carry out a pilot project on "best practices" as it relates to our

education programs. Federations agreed to provide information to CHF Canada. Our staff will then tabulate the results and share the information with all federations at the next committee meeting. This will allow each federation to see which approaches or practices lead to the most successful education programs. This sharing of information around “best practices” will help all federations take decisions that will strengthen their own education programs.

The Federations Committee also elected a new Co-ordinating Group which will meet between now and the next full committee meeting. Members of the Co-ordinating Group are:

*Kerry Panter* from VICHA representing British Columbia

*Joanne Mick* from SACHA representing the Prairies

*Olga Tasci* from CHASEO representing Ontario

*Andrée Richard* from CQCH representing Québec

*Yvonne MacDougall* from CHFNS representing the Atlantic region

*Scott Piatkowski* from CSACO representing housing co-op staff

*Mary Flynn* from CHFBC and *Judith Collins* from CHFT filling the at-large positions. ★

### Information for Co-ops

## Western Canada session of Co-op Staff as Resource Persons

Ten staff from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba spent 3 days in Calgary from September 23-25 at the first western Canada session of the *Co-op Staff as Resource Persons* workshop. Staff left the session with lots of new ideas to help the co-ops they work with function more effectively. Here's what one participant had to say, “I learned so much and there was so much invaluable material that I can apply both at work and in my personal life—the possibilities are endless.” ★

## New Quebec Co-operatives Act

The new Co-operatives Act in Québec, passed in 1997, allows co-ops to build into their by-laws a provision for mediation. The by-laws, and often the occupancy agreement, allow for mediation of disputes between the co-op board and a member. The mediators can be from the local federation, or the office of a lawyer or notary. The law recognizes the value of neutral, outside mediators in resolving disputes. The mediation option is much cheaper and faster than going to court, resulting in less energy drain and more enthusiasm for the co-op. ★



See the insert in this issue for the latest information in preparing for the Year 2000. ★

## Co-op housing books to help you manage your co-op

See the flyer included with this issue of *Newsbriefs* for the latest promotions from the Co-op Housing Bookstore. On sale this month is *Job Descriptions*, over 25 plain language job descriptions for boards, committees and staff. The publication gives information about the board's responsibilities and its relationship to staff. The bookstore is also selling *Property Management*, a book that helps boards understand the property manager's job. The French publication on sale this month is *Le conseil d'administration*. All of these items are on sale until January 14, 2000.

For more information, contact the Co-op Housing Bookstore, c/o the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, 658 Danforth Avenue, Suite 306, Toronto, Ontario M4J 5B9. ★

## **National Coalition on Housing and Homelessness**

**T**he National Coalition on Housing and Homelessness is a new partnership of national and regional organizations. The coalition was formed in September to create a strong national voice on housing and homelessness issues. Participants include national Aboriginal organizations; housing advocacy organizations; the faith community; and major labour, municipal and social policy groups. Following up on our resolutions on housing and homelessness at the AGM, CHF Canada was active in helping to organize the coalition.

Two representatives of the Coalition, **Frank Palmateer**, Vice-President of the Congress of Aboriginal People, and **Debbie Saidman**, Director, CHF Canada, presented a brief to the Standing Committee on Finance on November 19th, as part of the federal pre-budget consultations.

The coalition plans to continue meeting and sharing information. Members will raise housing and homelessness issues with MPs and cabinet ministers, and with government officials. The group is considering how to identify possible program proposals and delivery mechanisms for new housing. ★

## **Bill to end poverty**

**M**ore than 450 organizations in Québec are now working on a provincial law to end poverty. The movement started in 1995 with the "Bread and Roses" march and its nine recommendations to end poverty. It gained more support in 1996, the International Year for the Elimination of Poverty, at a summit in Montreal. The idea of a provincial law as a strategy to end poverty in the province was born in October 1997. In 1998 the coalition proposing the law began collecting signatures in favour of the project. In 1998 and 1999 more than 100,000 people signed the petition. The coalition has just completed a draft text of the proposed law.

In January and February of 2000 there will be regional meetings throughout Québec to discuss the draft. The coalition will finalize the text in March and April of 2000 and introduce it in the National Assembly in May of 2000. ★

## **People and Places**

**N**icholas Gazzard has been appointed to the position of Director, Sector Development, effective November 1, 1999. Nicholas has been employed with CHF Canada as a co-op services officer. He joined our staff last March after ten years of service as managing director of COHO Management Services Society in Vancouver. Nicholas brings co-op experience and management expertise to his new position. He will be based in our Ottawa office. **Mark Goldblatt** and **Sylvie Moreau** will continue to do co-op services work on contract for CHF Canada. ★

## **Prizes, politics highlights of B.C. Co-op Fair**

**O**ver 200 co-op members attended the first Co-op Housing Fair on October 17 in Pitt Meadows, B.C. The fair, jointly sponsored by CHF Canada and the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C., gave co-op members a chance to learn more about both federations and the services they offer. The event featured children's activities, co-op videos, a band, and prize draws every hour. One of the prizes was six months free Internet access from our new MemberTel program. Participants could get information about things like insurance, management services and bulk purchase of appliances, carpets and other supplies at the booths around the room. Co-op members could get their Co-op Fair passports stamped at each booth and then enter the draw for the grand prize. Congratulations to **Peg Bruce** from Meadowlands Co-op who won the microwave oven donated by Edmonds Appliance Centre.

The mayors of Pitt Meadows and neighbouring Maple Ridge attended and the provincial government

sent a proclamation declaring October 17 “Co-op Housing Day”. There was even more reason to celebrate when the **Hon. Hedy Fry** announced that federal co-ops in B.C. would not be transferred to the province. The fair was such a success there are plans to hold it again next year in another region of B.C. ★

## Western federations get together at Goldeye

**T**he two Alberta federations, NACHA and SACHA, invited representatives from other federations in B.C. and Manitoba to join them October 1–3 for the eleventh annual Goldeye conference. Among the 48 people attending was CHF Canada director **Ambrose Reschny**, who was invited to provide a connection to the unfederated co-ops in Saskatchewan. The two Alberta-based directors **Debbie Saidman** and **Patricia Matthews** were there, as was **Gary Panagiotidis**, representing CHF/BC. CHF Canada president **Wes Hosler** represented the Manitoba region.

**Sylvie Moreau** led a workshop on running an effective federation. **Lynn Hanley** gave an overview of the new Alberta co-op legislation. And **Andrea Rogers** presented a workshop on Aging in Place, organized by **Audrey Templeton**.

“We always have a really good time,” said **Debbie Saidman**, CHF Canada Alberta regional director. “It helps us realize that we’re part of a much bigger picture and let’s us know that there are other people out there dealing with the same issues.” ★

## What’s in a name?

**T**ell us the story of your co-op’s name. CHF Canada is preparing a history of Canadian housing co-ops and we’d like to hear how and why your co-op’s name was chosen. Your story could be as short as one or two sentences. Please keep it no longer than a couple of paragraphs. Send it to **Marianne Moershel** at:

R.R. 2, 2242 Queensborough Road  
Madoc, Ontario K0K 2K0  
613.473.1299 • 613.473.1350 fax  
mmoershel@snowonder.net

For more information on the co-op history project, see the insert included with this issue of *Newsbriefs*. ★

## First PEI education event a success

**O**n October 24, 20 members from five housing co-ops met for the first ever Prince Edward Island education event in Charlottetown. The event was a great success and co-op members are eager to hold the next education day. There were a total of four workshops: Board basics, Replacement Reserves, Managing Conflict and Preparing a Budget. The day was memorable too as **George Proud** came during the lunch break to announce that CMHC would not be transferring administration of co-ops in Prince Edward Island to the province. ★

## BRUNCH education event growing

**B**RUNCH (Brunswick Co-op Housing Association) held its annual education event on October 23, 1999 in Moncton, New Brunswick. Members could choose from two workshops in the morning (Board basics or New Members in your Co-op) and two in the afternoon (Reading Financial statements or Participation). A total of 24 members from eight co-ops and two non-profits attended the event—up from last year. ★

## CHRA plans annual Congress

**T**he Canadian Housing and Renewal Association’s Annual Congress will be held from May 3-6 at the Delta Meadowvale Resort & Conference Centre, Mississauga, Ontario. The theme “Connections” will explore the links between housing and the physical, social and economic well-being of Canadians. CHRA is a national non-profit organization representing groups who manage and deliver non-profit housing in Canada. For information contact CHRA, 401-251 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa, Canada K1P 5J6; Phone: (613) 594-3007; Fax: (613) 594-9596; Email: info@chra-achru.ca; Website www.chra-achru.ca ★

## Sharing challenges and solutions — NAHC annual general meeting

In late October hundreds of housing co-operators from all over the United States gathered at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, the site of their 39th annual general meeting. The week of activities for the members of the National Association of Housing Cooperatives included workshops, luncheons honouring outstanding co-operators both young and old, and the annual meeting. Housing Managers attended the Registered Cooperative Manager Program while young co-op members participated in the sixth annual Young Cooperators Program.

On behalf of CHF Canada, Ontario Regional Director **Donna Charbonneau** welcomed NAHC members to Canada and expressed interest in finding ways to strengthen the relationship between Canadian and American co-operators. **Tom Clement**, Executive Director of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto welcomed NAHC members to Toronto. Both CHF Canada and CHFT co-hosted the AGM with NAHC. Some directors, members and staff of both organisations attended various activities during the week.

For many of the American co-operators one of the highlights of visiting Toronto was the tour of local housing co-ops organised by CHFT. Other Canadian content in the meeting included workshops led by CHFT instructors and participation by Canadian youth in the NAHC young cooperators program.

1999 was a challenging and exciting year for the NAHC, featuring both good and bad news. In May, the board appointed a new executive director, **Douglas Kleine**, to lead the association. Then a fire on June 12 ravaged NAHC's offices in Alexandria, Virginia forcing the relocation of the office to Washington D.C. In 1999 NAHC was the founding member of the new Cooperative Housing Coalition representing housing co-operatives in areas of public policy and relationship with government.

For more information about the NAHC visit their website at [www.coophousing.org](http://www.coophousing.org). ★

## ICA housing committee meets

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) met in September in Quebec City. The event marked the first time the ICA had met in North America. More than 1500 delegates from all parts of the world and from all types of co-operatives participated in the Congress. Housing co-ops were represented by some 50 delegates from the ICA Housing Committee. During the two days before the Congress the members of the committee and the representatives from Canadian housing co-ops had the chance to talk about a number of issues.

CHF Canada, la Federation regionale des cooperatives d'habitation de Quebec Chaudiere-Appalaches (FRECHAQC) and la Confederation quebecoise des cooperatives d'habitation (CQCH) joined together to welcome our international colleagues. A supper brought together some of the key members of the co-op housing movement. A bus tour of some of the major housing co-ops caused much interest and discussion. Finally, a visit to the Tam-Tam Cafe gave committee members a chance to learn about a unique housing project that earned a CMHC award for its work with youth. This was very appropriate because the committee had talked about the need for such initiatives. All these activities were made possible thanks to financial assistance from la Societe d'habitation du Quebec (SHQ), the Quebec government's housing authority, and CMHC. ★

## We'd like to hear from you

We want to run more news from housing co-ops and federations across the country. If you have a story you'd like to see covered, please call **Merrilee Robson** at 1-877-533-2667 (879-4116 in the B.C. Lower Mainland ), e-mail: [mrobson@chfc.ca](mailto:mrobson@chfc.ca). ★

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