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Newsbriefs

SPECIAL EDITION

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

1995

- CHF Canada proposes an independent, sector-based agency to take over the co-op programs.

1996

- The federal budget offers CMHC's programs to the provinces and territories. CHF Canada members launch a grassroots campaign to stop the transfer.
- CHF Canada tables a detailed proposal for a sector-based agency.
- CHF Canada AGM votes to support the proposal and oppose the transfer.

1997

- Co-op members continue to meet with members of Parliament, sign petitions and write thousands of letters and postcards in support of the agency.
- "Raise the Roof" rally in Toronto draws 1,300 co-op members and many MPs.
- CMHC signs first transfer agreement with Saskatchewan in March. Three more agreements are signed by August.
- Intensive lobbying delays signing of transfer agreement with Nova Scotia.
- Ontario federal Liberal caucus votes unanimously to oppose the transfer of co-ops to Ontario.

1998

- The grassroots campaign heats up in provinces that haven't signed.
- Ontario federal Liberals step up the pressure on the minister not to transfer co-ops.
- In April, the BC government asks CMHC to take co-ops off the table in any deal.
- CMHC signs with Manitoba and Yukon.

Federal minister gives thumbs-up to co-op sector agency

We did it! Seven years after CHF Canada first put out the idea, the federal minister responsible for CMHC, the **Hon. David Collenette**, has agreed to negotiate the first contract for an independent co-op program agency.

"This is great news for housing co-ops administered by CMHC," said **René Daoust**, president of CHF Canada. "There are important issues still to settle, including costs and the make-up and role of the agency's board. But the Minister has asked CMHC to negotiate a contract, and CMHC's president has told us he wants to work towards launching the agency by January 2004."

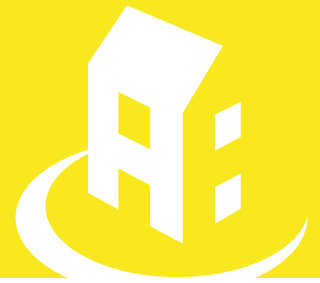
CHF Canada and CMHC first discussed the idea of a separate co-op agency in 1995. Talks were put on hold when the 1996 federal budget offered CMHC's social housing programs – including co-ops – to the provinces and territories. Co-op members responded with a nation-wide lobby that quickly won the support of dozens of members of Parliament. Nearly three years would pass before the minister agreed to stop the transfer of co-ops. It would take another three years for his successor to give the go-ahead to the agency.

Once up and running, the sector-based agency will take on responsibility for all federal co-ops in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Prince Edward Island. Co-ops under provincial or municipal control will not come under the agency. The Quebec Confederation of Housing Co-ops has proposed a parallel agency to the Quebec government that would work in partnership with the new national agency.



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1999

- Federal minister announces in January that co-ops are off the table in Ontario.
- The lobby focus shifts to BC, Alberta and PEI. By November, co-ops in those provinces are off the table.
- Manitoba offers to transfer co-ops back to CMHC. The upload will leave 90 per cent of federal co-ops in CMHC's hands.
- CMHC and Ontario sign a transfer agreement. Federal co-ops are out of the deal.

2000

- Federal minister strikes CMHC/provincial sector working group to study CHF Canada's agency proposal.

2001

- The working group meets through the winter and spring.
- Talks take place over the summer between CMHC and CHF Canada staff.
- The minister affirms his support for the agency idea but is waiting for the working group's report.

2002

- The last working group meeting takes place early in the year. Detailed talks with CMHC follow.
- With funding from CMHC, CHF Canada works out more details on the agency's risk management approach.
- CHF Canada members vote for the sixth time to support the agency.
- When the new federal minister expresses some doubts, CHF Canada contacts more than 100 MPs to ask for support.
- **VICTORY!** In December, Minister David Collenette gives the green light to the agency. He asks CMHC and CHF Canada to work out the outstanding issues and negotiate a first contract.

A fresh approach

The new agency will be an independent organization, separate from both CHF Canada and government. It will combine a fresh and positive approach to program administration with excellent service to co-ops. Co-ops will get information from the agency to help them operate better, and prompt attention if they are running into trouble. Through the agency, they'll be able to share what they do well and learn from the success of others. Best of all, federal co-ops will stay at the federal level.

Next steps

CHF Canada volunteers and staff will negotiate terms of a contract for the agency with CMHC. To stay right up to date on what's happening, check out <http://members.chfc.ca/eng/pages/agency.asp> or call **Merrilee Robson**, Communications Officer, toll-free at 1-877-533-2667, ext. 122 📍



Members in Peterborough, Ontario, meet with Prime Minister Chrétien to discuss the future of co-op housing and promote the national agency.