

# Newsbriefs

NOVA SCOTIA EDITION FALL 2006 – Volume 5, No. 2



## MP gets to know co-op housing

*There's a new government in Ottawa this year. That's why housing co-ops took the time to ask their members of Parliament to "Get to Know Co-op Housing" this summer.*

**Bill Casey**, member of Parliament for Cumberland–Colchester–Musquodoboit Valley got a chance to visit **Atlantis Housing Co-operative** in his riding and learn a bit more about co-op housing. The other co-ops in the riding are **Hubtown Housing Co-operative** in Truro and **Chignecto Housing Co-operative** in Amherst, Mr. Casey's hometown.

**Nancy Loomer** gave the MP a tour of Atlantis, including a unit that was ready for occupancy on September 1. The unit was in excellent condition and had a lovely deck backing on a green belt with a playground.

Co-op representatives talked about the non-profit principles of co-op housing and outlined the different co-op programs. Mr. Casey told CHF Canada's representatives that he was impressed with the co-op, is interested in promoting co-operative housing and would like to see more co-operative housing projects developed. He promised to pass this view along to Prime Minister Harper. 🇨🇦



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You won't want to miss the fall education conference in Dartmouth on Saturday, November 4.

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Hubtown Housing Co-op celebrates 21 years. Join JoAnn Bidgood as she recounts her recent visit to the co-op.

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Nova Scotia members welcome Bridget McConnell as their regional director.

# CHF Canada AGM - like one big family

**Cynthia Currie**, a member of **Tri-Sack Housing Co-op** in Sackville, attended CHF Canada's annual meeting for the first time this year, thanks to a bursary from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, CHF Canada's travel pool, and special discounted AGM fees for small co-ops. Asked about her first experience with CHF Canada's AGM, she described it in one word – "Wonderful."

Cynthia says the AGM "felt like one big family gathered together with a common purpose, and with the same issues. It was well organized, informative, fun and exhausting in a good way."

She attended four workshops in the Member Education Forum and found the workshop leaders "good leaders" and "very energetic."

When asked if she would recommend the AGM to co-ops that haven't attended, she answered, "Absolutely!"

**Crystal Grange Housing Co-operative** in Bridgewater had another reason to enjoy the AGM. They received the **Risk Management Award**, presented in partnership between CHF Canada, The Co-operators, and HB Group Insurance Management. The award is given to co-ops that reduce the risks in their co-ops. Crystal Grange developed a plan to stop outsiders from entering their property, and they are using the award funds to repair fences and erect new ones.

Member **Cecile Mansfield** said that two of their members who attended the AGM enjoyed themselves very much. The workshops were informative, they had lots to choose from and they brought back what they learned at the AGM to share with other members of the co-op.

**Mark your calendars and start planning for next year's AGM, June 7-9 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.**

## CHF Canada welcomes Debbie Hamilton

**Debbie Hamilton** (shown below) is the new Member Services Co-ordinator in CHF Canada's Nova Scotia office. Debbie first learned about co-op housing in 1993 when she became a managing partner with Concord Properties, a property management company that specializes in housing co-ops.

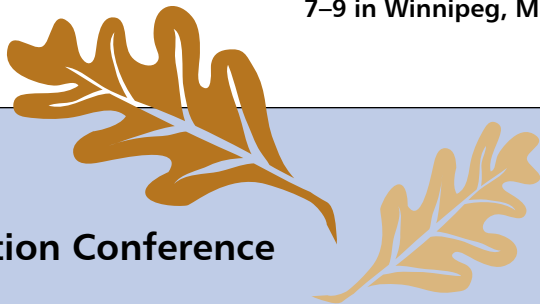
"The more I learned, the more I realized that co-op housing was a great option for all types of families and all types of income levels."

She rounded out her knowledge by working directly with co-ops and attending CHF Canada annual meetings.

When Debbie and her business partner sold Concord Properties this year she heard that **JoAnn Bidgood** was retiring. She decided to apply for her position.

"I met a lot of wonderful people in the last 13 years and I like to think I've made a difference working with them. I didn't want to just walk away from that. This is an opportunity to continue to work in the co-op sector."

Debbie is enthusiastic about ways she might help Nova Scotia co-ops. "The **Cost Cutters** program is an opportunity that is not being used by many." As a co-op manager, Debbie saw first-hand the benefits of this cost-saving program. ☺



## Fall Education Conference

Don't miss the Nova Scotia CHF Canada Fall Education Conference in Dartmouth at the Holiday Inn Harbourview on Saturday, November 4th. The conference line-up features experienced workshop leaders who will share information on what it takes to be effective in running your co-op. Topics covered include budgeting, dealing with arrears, working with staff and management, and understanding the *Co-op Act*.

If you live more than 100 km from the Halifax area, there is also a travel rebate available for co-ops. To register or find out more go to our website: [www.chfc.coop](http://www.chfc.coop) or call our Nova Scotia office toll-free from anywhere in the province at 1-866-213-2667.





## Hubtown Housing – Truro, NS – 21 years old!!

by JoAnn Bidgood

*JoAnn Bidgood visited Hubtown Housing Co-operative in Truro in August, along with Bridget McConnell, Nova Scotia Regional Director, and Debbie Hamilton, CHF Canada's new Member Services Co-ordinator. Here's her report of the visit.*

We had been promising to visit Hubtown on several previous occasions, but there were always extenuating circumstances that prevented us from doing so - mainly, the bad winter weather.

▲  
New President René LeBlanc with wife Sherry and two boys Ryan and Riley in front of their unit at Hubtown.

▶  
Co-op members Debra and Wade Shears with Dick & Esther Provencher next to Ruth White standing behind them. Photo was taken in front of Wade and Debra's unit.

But I'm happy to say we have now rectified our omission, and enjoyed a very nice tour of the co-op. **Esther Provencher** and her husband, Richard, were the gracious hosts for the visit.

The first three units we visited were the upstairs flats which are specifically for senior couples or couples without children. They are two-bedroom units with balconies. **Ruth White** welcomed us to her home, and gave us the grand tour.

We also visited a downstairs unit which was laid out somewhat differently. The couple who we visited were new members to the co-op in February, 2006. **Wade and Debra Shears** are former Armed Forces personnel and Mr. Shears is experienced in building and maintenance. He has a lot of plans for the co-op which include annual inspections and preventative maintenance - music to the ears of a successful co-op such as Hubtown.

The co-op spirit is very much alive in this co-op as was shown by the willingness to have the three of us walk through their homes.

We also visited a family unit in the co-op. The home of **René and Sherry LeBlanc**. René is the President of the co-op. René and Sherry's son was busy making hand puppets and showed all three of us his handiwork. Very inventive.

Hubtown Housing Co-operative has a total of 20 units. Ten of the units are for seniors, seven for families and three for single people.

The co-operative has a lovely green belt behind the family units with a playground for the children. The co-op is in excellent repair, the units are bright and sunny and well kept and it was a pleasure to experience a tour with these good people.

It was a lovely visit, enjoyed by the three of us. We only wish we had been able to visit sooner. ☺



▶  
Nova Scotia members  
welcome **Bridget McConnell**  
as their new regional  
director.



## Publication information

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## Meet Bridget McConnell

It was chance that brought **Bridget McConnell**, CHF Canada's new Nova Scotia regional director to co-op housing. When she was eight months pregnant with her second child, a customer in the Halifax bakery she managed overheard her talking about needing to find a new place to live.

The customer was a member of a nearby housing co-op, with a vacancy coming up. Bridget was amazed to hear about affordable housing where the members made the decisions about their homes. She couldn't wait to move in and, when she did, she says, "I fell in love with co-op housing. I don't think I'll ever move out."

Bridget is now president of **Tri-Sack Housing Co-operative** in Sackville. Tri-Sack is an 18-unit housing co-op made up of 3-bedroom duplexes and townhouses. Bridget moved there at the end of 2005, after five years in **Charles Court Housing Co-op** in Halifax.

Bridget has been active with CHF Canada since 2002, when she joined the Nova Scotia advisory council. She is a trained CHF Canada workshop leader.

She says she decided to run for the position as CHF Canada's regional director because she felt she could be a strong voice for Nova Scotia co-ops at the national level. "On the advisory council, I got to know co-op members and they would talk about their concerns and their successes. I want to

assure them that CHF Canada is listening to those concerns, and to continue the strong relationship Nova Scotia co-ops have with CHF Canada."

Bridget also represents housing co-ops on the **Nova Scotia Co-op Council**. She is the mother of three children, aged 19, 12 and nine.

## Thanks to JoAnn

CHF Canada recently held a surprise dinner to thank **JoAnn Bidgood** for her hard work on behalf of CHF Canada and Nova Scotia housing co-ops.

JoAnn is retiring after four years as Member Services Co-ordinator. She started in this position when CHF Canada opened the Nova Scotia office in 2002. Before that she had done work for CHF Canada as a lobby co-ordinator.

"Because of JoAnn's warmth, she was made welcome at housing co-ops throughout Nova Scotia," said **Nick Sidor**, CHF Canada's Director, Corporate Affairs, "and that meant that CHF Canada was also welcomed in every corner of the province."