

Newsbriefs

NOVA SCOTIA EDITION SPRING 2006 – Volume 5, No. 1

Amos Housing Co-op saved!



The Nova Scotia government and CHF Canada have worked together to protect affordable co-op housing and stop **Amos Housing Co-op** from dissolving.

Amos Housing Co-op was formed in 1981 and consists of eight homes in the Spryfield area of Halifax. It was originally developed under CMHC's Section 95 program. Currently its operating agreement is administered by the Department of Community Services. Like other non-profit housing co-ops, government subsidies help keep the co-op affordable for low-income households in Nova Scotia.

But four years ago, the co-operative stopped reporting to the Nova Scotia Inspector of Co-operatives and the Department of Community Services. It became clear that the members of the co-operative wanted to end the co-operative's non-profit status and own their own units. Officials from both the Co-operatives Branch and the Department of Community [2] ▶

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You won't want to miss the May 6 education conference. Learn more about the role of a co-op director, co-op finances, and how to avoid vacancies. Members will elect the new Nova Scotia regional director.

3

Find out how bursaries can help your co-op attend CHF Canada's AGM.

4

Your Nova Scotia regional director updates on activities and bids farewell.



Mark your calendars

Don't miss the Education conference: Saturday, May 6

Holiday Inn, 99 Wyse Road, Dartmouth.

Whether you're brand new to your co-op's board or an experienced director, you will learn more about your role as a director, learn more about managing your co-op's finances, or find out how to avoid vacancies in your co-op.

All CHF Canada members are encouraged to send a representative for the election of members of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council.

Nova Scotia Regional Director election

CHF Canada's Board includes 16 directors – 10 regional representatives, one representative of the Aboriginal community, and five directors elected at large. The at-large elections take place at the CHF Canada AGM, and are one of the highlights of the meeting, when members choose people to represent them at the national Board table.

CHF Canada members in Nova Scotia have chosen to elect their Regional Director at a meeting held in the region. That election will take place on May 6, at the Nova Scotia Advisory Council meeting, held over the lunch hour during our Education Conference. The election will be for a one-year term.

Nomination forms are available on CHF Canada's website in the AGM section of our website at www.chfc.coop. You can find information on what's involved and the role of directors there too. Or contact Nick Sidor, Director, Corporate Affairs at 1-800-465-2752, ext.231 or by e-mail at nsidor@chfc.ca.

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Services met with members of the co-operative to let them know that ownership of the housing for personal gain is not allowed under the provincial *Co-operative Associations Act* and the co-operative's own operating agreement.

After numerous meetings, the Co-operatives Branch has stepped in and appointed a Liquidator whose job it is to "manage the co-operative and to determine its ongoing viability". The Liquidator is to report to the Co-operatives Branch within 60 days.

CHF Canada will be working with officials from the Co-operatives Branch and the Department of Community Services to review the information and determine a plan for the future of the co-operative. CHF Canada has been asked to provide information and training to the members of the co-operative.

"This is a vital step for the future of not-for-profit co-op housing in Nova Scotia and across Canada," said **Nicholas Gazzard**, CHF Canada's Executive Director. "It will help to preserve affordable social housing. CHF Canada's members don't want to see the stock of non-profit housing co-ops sold off at any price. They have directed us to do everything we can to ensure that government-assisted housing co-ops continue to operate on a not-for-profit basis."

CHF Canada has worked in collaboration with the government to prevent the private ownership of the co-operative and the loss of affordable housing in Nova Scotia. We believe that the public investment of co-op housing must be protected. Non-profit co-operative housing is meant to help Canadians who need affordable rental housing – today and in the future. Allowing the members to own their units would deprive the community of valuable affordable housing that Canadian taxpayers and earlier co-op members have helped pay for. ☺

Following the law: Co-operative Associations Act

Housing co-operatives in Nova Scotia are incorporated under the provincial *Co-operative Associations Act*.

- The Act sets out what co-ops are allowed to do and is administered by the Inspector of Co-operatives
- The Act sets out how co-ops are formed and governs the inspection, examination and supervision of those co-ops
- New sections, (Section 61 A-G) were added to the Act in 2001 to prevent the private ownership of housing co-ops. They set out special rules about the operation of non-profit co-operatives

- The Act says that housing co-operatives are non-profit associations
- Non-profits can not be converted to condominiums or other types of associations
- Co-op members can not profit from the sale of the co-op's property
- If a co-op winds up, any assets of the co-operative must be distributed to another non-profit association or another non-profit housing co-op.

The intention of these sections of the Act is to prevent the private ownership of housing co-ops in Nova Scotia. For more information about how the Act affects your co-op, contact **Ron Skibbens**, Inspector of Co-operatives at (902) 424-6154 or nscoop@gov.ns.ca.



Joe Maclsaac Housing Co-operative – 20 Years Old

Joe Maclsaac is a small co-op with 10 units made up of five duplexes. All the co-op members are also on the Board of Directors. The co-op overlooks the Strait of Canso where big ships come into Port Hawkesbury. Members watch the ships go by and recall the years when they'd see supertankers five football fields long coming in from Japan.

The co-op was named after Joe "Judique" Maclsaac, the manager of a local building supply company and a community activist, who died in a car accident just before the co-op was ready to open. The co-op approached Maclsaac's widow and asked for her permission to name the co-op after her late husband. The Maclsaac family attended the official opening of Joe Maclsaac Housing Co-op.

After 20 years of looking out over the Strait, the co-op carried out renovations this fall. In addition to replacing the flooring in all their units, they installed 25 new windows.

And the co-op has also weathered a few storms. A few years ago, the co-op faced a significant financial loss when a former treasurer defrauded the co-op of \$7,000. However, as members of CHF Canada they had insurance with the Co-operators, and the funds were reimbursed.

Doreen Beaton, one of the founding members of the co-op recalls the incident. "We certainly need the protection that CHF Canada and the Co-operators offers us."

Joe Maclsaac Housing Co-op has been a member of CHF Canada since its founding. The co-op received its 20-year appreciation award from CHF Canada at the Nova Scotia Education Conference on November 12, 2005.

Why you'll want to be there

Plan to attend the 2006 CHF Canada AGM in London, June 8 – 10. Big changes are in store – all aimed at more convenience, less rushing around, and more opportunities to meet and share stories with fellow delegates. The meeting includes:

- Special guest speaker **Craig Kielburger**, founder of Free the Children
- Workshops in the Member Education Forum
- A more relaxed business meeting, with plenty of time to consider members' resolutions
- More seats at the popular networking lunch on Friday
- A "Meet the Candidates" session and voting for at-large elections.

Interested? Visit the website at www.chfc.coop and follow the links to the AGM information centre.

AGM Bursaries for Nova Scotia co-ops

The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services is once again providing bursaries to allow housing co-ops from Nova Scotia to attend CHF Canada's annual meeting. Over the past three years, over 50 housing co-operatives have used the bursary program to help send a member to CHF Canada's AGM. Thanks to the bursary program there is more representation from Nova Scotia housing co-operatives at the AGM. And it gives an opportunity for co-op members from Nova Scotia to meet members from housing co-operatives across the country.

"The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services thinks that housing co-ops get a lot out of the workshops, debates and networking that are part of CHF Canada's annual meeting," says **Warren Olsen**, the department's program administration officer. "That's why we have made this bursary available for the fourth consecutive year."

To apply for a bursary, contact **Karine Ethier**, at 1-800-465-2752, ext. 239 or e-mail kethier@chfc.ca.

Rolando Inzunza presenting a 20-year member award to Doreen Beaton from Joe MacIsaac Co-op (see p. 3)



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Message from your regional director

I hope that you are doing well and that your co-ops are healthy and striving! I want to give you an update on what I have been doing as your CHF Canada regional director.

CHF Canada's Board met last September to plan the national operating priorities for this year. Some of these priorities are:

- help for Section 95 housing co-ops
- lobby for the development of new co-op housing
- promote good management and governance among member housing co-ops
- help leaky co-ops in British Columbia;
- support members in Ontario in their efforts to change the *Social Housing Reform Act*.

If you would like to learn more about any of these issues, visit the Members' Network section of our website at www.chfc.coop or contact CHF Canada staff.

Locally in Nova Scotia, I have met with several co-ops to talk about CHF Canada and its services to members. The CHF Canada staff and I would be happy to attend your board or members meeting to talk to you about our services and activities.

We have also been working with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on ways to improve member input to CHF Canada. The teleconference meetings have had low participation. We will be contacting past members of the Advisory Council to ask for feedback and advice. If you are interested in getting involved in the Advisory, please contact the Nova Scotia CHF Canada office staff.

On a final note, I am saddened to say that I will be resigning from my position as Regional Director effective April 30, 2006. My partner, Nicole, and I will be moving out of Kabuki Co-op and to Alberta so we can be closer to her family. It was a pleasure to work with all of you over the past year. I feel privileged to have met some wonderful people who are equally passionate and dedicated about the co-operative movement. I will truly miss the many opportunities to contribute to the co-operative housing movement nationally, regionally, and locally.

All my best,
Rolando Inzunza
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