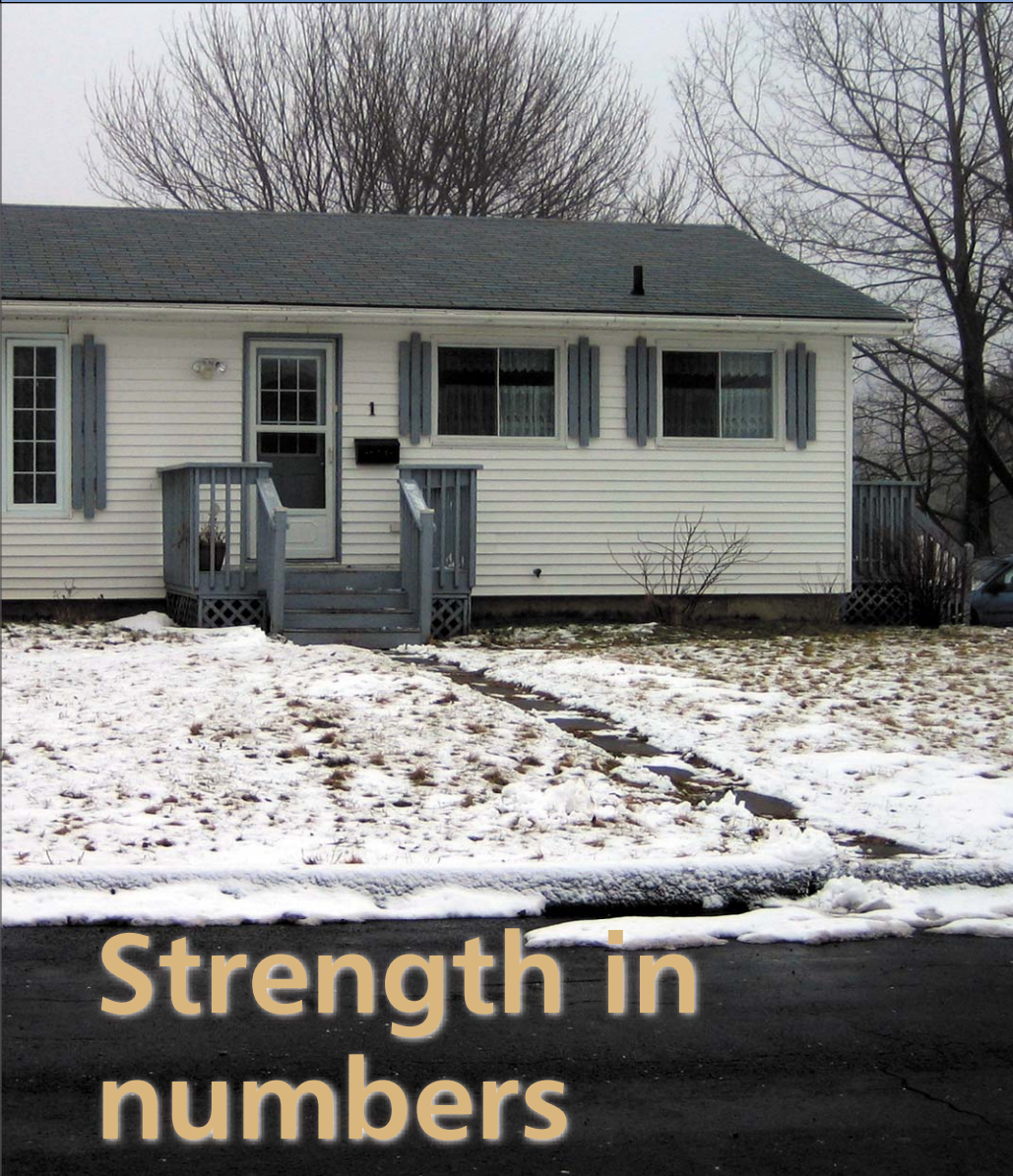


Newsbriefs

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Strength in numbers

Tri-Sack Housing Co-op shows what's good about mergers

"We are much stronger as one co-op than when we were two separate, struggling co-ops, says **Cynthia Currie**, treasurer of **Tri-Sack Housing Co-operative** in Sackville, Nova Scotia. Tri-Sack was formed by the merger of **Spry-Sack** and **Fairmount** housing co-ops in November 2005.

"One of the main reasons for the merger is that there is strength in numbers," Currie says. At 18 units, Tri-Sack is still not a large co-op but much larger than the 6-unit Fairmount Housing Co-op she moved into nine years ago.

"When you are that small and you have a vacancy or need a major renovation, you really feel it financially. As a larger co-op you have better buying power – it is easier to negotiate a better price when a company is supplying 18 units. Another plus is that you have more people [2] ▶



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All co-ops must meet government requirements. Ron Skibbens guides co-ops through the process.

to get involved. When we were 6 units, basically everyone was on the Board or a committee, which tends to burn people out. With a larger co-op, work and duties can be spread around so no one feels overwhelmed.”

The co-ops started working on the merger in 2004, with the help of Pathways Housing Services. Members of each co-op met independently to discuss the possibility of a merger. Then each co-op passed a special resolution, authorizing their respective boards of directors to meet and work out the terms of the merger. The membership, after reviewing the boards’ recommendations and draft amalgamation documents, passed a special resolution to complete amalgamation.

A local law firm prepared the merger documents and by-laws. Housing Services staff from Nova Scotia’s Department of Community Services played an instrumental role throughout the process, which took a year to complete.

“The merger was a positive step in creating a strong and financially stable co-op,” Currie says.

Asked if she would recommend a merger to other small co-ops facing financial difficulties, she said, “I would tell them that a merger is definitely something they should consider. They need to get in touch with someone who can help walk them through the many steps of the process. It isn’t something that happens overnight and it isn’t always easy bringing two or three diverse groups of people together and getting them to work as one. But it is definitely worth the effort. You feel stronger and more secure when you have the numbers backing you up.” ☺



▶
Bob Daley, President and Senior Property Manager with Concord Properties Management.

Below: **Dave Emery, President of Pathways Housing Services.**
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Management companies on the move

Both Concord Properties Management and Pathways Housing Services will have new offices.

Concord Properties Management recently moved to new offices at Suite 100, 99 Wyse Road, Dartmouth. (connected to the Holiday Inn, Harbourview at the Dartmouth entrance to the MacDonald Bridge.)

Bob Daley, President and Senior Property Manager, says the new offices give Concord the space they need for 10 employees in their three property management teams. “The space gives us room for all divisions of the company: maintenance planning and management function; building and management consulting; and finance and operations advisory for housing co-operatives.” Larger meeting and education facilities and a library of co-operative materials are also included in the facility. Daley says bringing all services together has improved operational efficiencies and they are now more accessible to clients on both sides of the Harbour.

Pathways Housing Services, which specializes in working with housing co-operatives throughout Nova Scotia, is moving to a new location in March.

Their new offices will be in the Roy Building at 1657 Barrington Street, downtown Halifax. **Dave Emery**, President, explains the move was needed “to accommodate our growing business and provide improved service delivery to clients.” The new office is located on the main bus route and a short walk from the ferry and parking. The building is equipped with elevators, accessible washrooms, and a boardroom for small group meetings and training sessions. The new office will be fully operational by March 1, 2007, after which time Dave invites you to drop in and say “Hello.” ☺





What's a portable workshop?

A portable workshop is customized training for your co-op, delivered at your co-op. Not sure which workshop your co-op really needs? We can tailor a workshop to meet the specific needs of your co-op.

Here are some of the workshops that your co-op may find useful:

GETTING GOVERNANCE RIGHT

We are hearing more and more about good governance these days. What is meant by governance? In this workshop we won't talk about the day-to-day work of being a board member. Instead, we'll learn about the personal rewards and value of providing principled leadership, what governance is and how to get it right.

IN THE CHAIR: RUNNING SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

It takes more than rules of order to chair a successful meeting. This workshop will review the role of the chair, some chairing techniques, and simplified rules of order.

KEEPING YOUR CO-OP IN GOOD REPAIR

Deferring maintenance can create big problems that lead to high-cost solutions. So don't avoid those regular tasks.

VACANCIES CAN KILL YOUR CO-OP

What does it take to avoid vacancy? How do you keep your co-op full? This workshop will show you how to develop a successful marketing plan, design an easy and fast application process, and integrate new members.

GETTING AND KEEPING GOOD MANAGEMENT

CHF Canada has been promoting the importance of good governance and management in your co-op. We'll explain the difference between governance (decision making) and management (doing) and talk about how to divide up the work to get the desired result – a well managed co-op.

REPLACEMENT RESERVE PLANNING

Does your co-op have a plan for replacing major capital items? As co-ops age, more items need replacing. Is your co-op prepared? In this workshop, we will go through the process step by step.

PUZZLED BY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS?

Have you ever looked at your financial statements and wondered what you were approving? This workshop will increase your comfort level in reading and using your co-op's financial statements.

BUDGETING: MAKING SENSE OF DOLLARS AND CENTS

It's budget time again and you're not sure what to do? Or you're a board member and want more information about budgets? Join us for an in-depth look at the budget process. We'll talk about the steps in the annual budgeting cycle, how to put together operating and capital budgets, how to present the budget to members and how to monitor the budget during the year.

Each of the workshops listed above is three hours long. For more information about portable workshops, please contact **Karen Brodeur** at 423-7119 or 1-866-213-2667 (email kbrodeur@chfc.ca).

Nova Scotia Spring Education Event

Saturday, April 14, 2007
Holiday Inn Harbourview,
101 Wyse Road
Dartmouth

Don't miss the Nova Scotia CHF Canada Spring Education Conference in Dartmouth. Sound management, good governance and principled leadership are all parts of a healthy co-op. Workshops will focus on how to build the skills and use them in your co-op. All co-op members are welcome to come and learn, and connect with other co-op members from across the province.

If you live more than 100 km from the Halifax area, there is also a travel rebate available for co-ops. Find out more on our web site: www.chfcanada.coop

Questions? Contact: Nova Scotia Office: 1-866-213-2667.
Karen Brodeur, Co-operative Services Officer, kbrodeur@chfc.ca or
Debbie Hamilton, Member Services Co-ordinator, dhamilton@chfc.ca

An election for the Nova Scotia regional director on CHF Canada's Board will take place during the lunch session. Contact Nick Sidor, at the CHF Canada national office, 1-800-465-2753 ext. 231, or e-mail nsidor@chfc.ca.



Nova Scotia's Inspector of Co-operatives, Ron Skibbens, ensures that co-ops fulfill annual government filing requirements.



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Story ideas, comments or questions? Call Merrilee Robson at 1-877-533-2667 or e-mail mrobson@chfc.ca.

Editor: Debbie Hamilton
Design and printing:
EGO Creative Solutions
design@egocreatives.com
Cielo Print Inc.
jim@cieloprint.ca

Contact information

National Office
311-225 Metcalfe Street,
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1P9
Tel (613) 230-2201
Fax (613) 230-2231
Toll-free 1-800-465-2752

Nova Scotia Office
201-1099 Marginal Road
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 4P7
Tel (902) 423-7119
Fax (902) 423-7058
Toll-free 1-866-213-2667

Questions your co-op needs to answer

"Essentially, my job is the same for all types of co-ops," says **Ron Skibbens**, Nova Scotia's Inspector of Co-operatives. "I make sure they start up and wind up properly, and in between I try to make it as easy as possible for every co-op to provide all three requirements every year."

He reviews each co-op's incorporation documents and by-law changes to make sure they conform to the province's *Co-operative Associations Act*, and notes that changes to a co-op's by-laws are not legal until approved by his office. He also ensures that co-ops meet the annual filing requirements and, if a co-op goes out of business, sees that it is done in a way that is fair to members and any creditors.

Annual filing requirements

Annual filing requirements are the same for all co-ops. Co-ops need to provide a list of their directors, a financial report and a filing fee of \$26.50. "In addition, I ask housing co-ops nine simple questions about how they function as a co-op." Copies of the Annual Renewal form and other information are available in the Co-operatives section of the government website at www.rjsc.ca.

"Every year, I summarize the information provided by co-ops in an annual report (available at www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/coop/resources/)."

What happens to co-ops that don't fulfill those requirements?

"This is an automated process to ensure all co-ops get treated fairly," Skibbens says. "This is essentially the same as other businesses registered at the Registry of Joint Stock Companies."

- Each co-op gets a notice three months after their fiscal year-end, telling them when their filings are due.
- If they are not submitted by the due date, the co-op is placed in "default" status and a letter is sent asking the co-op to contact the Inspector of Co-operatives. (See www.rjsc.ca for your co-op's status and public record).
- If the co-op doesn't supply the information within seven months after their fiscal year-end, notice is placed in the Royal Gazette to inform the public that the co-op will be struck unless the missing filings are submitted within one month.
- If the co-op still hasn't provided the missing information 30 days after the notice in the Royal Gazette it can be struck from the Registry of Joint Stock Companies.

"I would appoint a liquidator to take over the co-op, dismiss the board of directors and run the co-op long enough to determine its ongoing viability," Skibbens says. "No housing co-op has ever completely shut down in Nova Scotia and I sincerely hope none ever does. Thanks and appreciation are due to your co-op boards of directors for the large amount of work they do every year to keep housing co-operatives functioning." 🙏