

The  
**CO-OPERATIVE**  
HOUSING  
FEDERATION  
*of Canada*



# NewsBriefs

Nova Scotia Edition  
Fall 2010 Volume 9, No. 2

## *Nova Scotia*

Members of North End United Housing Co-op, Barbara Nehley and Valerie Carvery, at CHF Canada's 2010 annual meeting accepted the Best Practices Award for their successful merger of four co-ops in Halifax.



### IN THIS EDITION

### GREETINGS FROM YOUR REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Page 2

### CO-OP MERGER IN LOWER SACKVILLE

Page 3

## Nova Scotians at the AGM

By Leela Chinniah

At this year's CHF Canada annual meeting in London, Ontario, there were a record-setting 21 representatives from Nova Scotia housing co-ops.

This was the first time attending a CHF Canada AGM for Cheryl Riley, a board member of Chignecto Housing Co-op in Amherst. "It was awesome," said Cheryl. She was particularly impressed with the technology used to link AGM participants with co-ops across the country who couldn't attend in person. To Riley, it was "a way to help co-ops link with each other and not feel like they are off on their own."

Thanks to a bursary program funded by the Province, members like Riley were able to attend and make contact with people from across the country. "I really enjoyed seeing different cultures and people who were there from different provinces," she said.

Terry Enfield, the president of Saduke Housing Co-op in Lower Sackville, has been to many CHF Canada annual meetings. For him, it's the size of the co-op that makes the biggest difference – both in how the co-op is run and in the very idea of what a co-op is. Like some other Nova Scotia co-ops represented at the AGM, his co-op is currently in the process of merging with another small co-op in order to take advantage of economies of scale and secure a more economically sustainable future.

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Greetings from your Regional Director



*CHF Canada's Nova Scotia regional director Jeanene Harnett with Dianne Kelderman, the CEO of the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council, at a Halifax Harbour cruise event during their 61st AGM.*

I hope you enjoyed your summer. I want to let members know about the great work we are doing on both the national and provincial level.

During CHF Canada's annual meeting, Nova Scotia was recognized for our work on housing co-op mergers. Our newest merged co-op, North End United in Halifax, received the Best Practices Award for their innovative work merging four co-ops. Their merger helped overcome significant issues of governance and management which threatened the viability of these co-ops. This and other successful mergers have been discussed at the national level during CHF Canada board meetings as a positive example for co-ops in other regions. My fellow board members have asked many questions regarding our work and the progress we have made.

With the help of the Department of Community Services we were able to send 25 delegates to our annual meeting in London, Ontario, thanks to their Bursary Program. This was one of the largest delegations from across Canada. I would like to thank Warren Olsen for his hard work and dedication to the co-op movement. Without his understanding, support and commitment, these projects would not run so smoothly.

I have attended several meetings with provincial representatives to discuss the future and viability of Nova Scotia co-ops. I see my role and duty as your regional director to develop a rapport with government to keep the co-op housing sector visible with open lines of communication. Regular information sharing creates opportunities for further success in the future. This is a duty I will continue to perform to the best of my ability.

In closing, I commend all co-ops for their role promoting and supporting the co-op movement in their communities and for continuing to promote good governance and sound management for all.

I have enjoyed my first year representing Nova Scotia co-ops and look forward to my next one. I plan to continue meeting members and visiting co-ops as often as possible. See you at the Fall Education Event on October 2nd!

**Jeanene Harnett**  
Nova Scotia Regional Director



## A FOND FAREWELL

**Warren Olsen** is leaving his position as the go-to guy on housing for the Department of Community Services (DCS) where he established a reputation as a great friend and champion of Nova Scotia co-ops. This August he took on the role of chief administrator for Richmond County. "CHF Canada will miss Warren's support and initiative," says CHF Canada Director, Sector Development, **Karla Skoutajan**. "He has played a central role in fostering our positive and productive relationship with DCS."

# Lower Sackville merger shows open process is crucial

by Karen Brodeur



Members celebrate the merger of Tri-Sack and Saduke Housing Co-ops

**H**ow a co-op comes to consider a merger is important. The merger process needs to be member-led with individuals and the co-op as a whole considering what is important to them.

This includes examining the co-op's goals and options for the future. Co-ops with viability issues may find their options limited and a merger may be one of the few options available. Co-ops without immediate difficulties may view a merger as part of its plan for long-term success or a way to strengthen the co-op housing movement.

Two housing co-operatives in Lower Sackville are leading examples of how a merger can benefit struggling co-operatives. In late May 2010 they voted unanimously to merge and become one 38-unit co-operative, Saduke Housing Co-operative.

These co-operatives started to think about the prospect of a merger

as one of them was experiencing financial difficulties and both were struggling to maintain resources for strong leadership. Each co-op met independently to discuss the option on two separate occasions. The decision to merge for these groups seemed to be the only logical option.

Usually, the concept of a merger is first considered by a leadership group within a co-op or a group of co-ops that share the same interest. This could be the board of directors or a special ad hoc committee tasked with studying the issue. At some point during the discussion, at an appropriate time, the concept of a merger should be introduced and discussed with the members of the co-ops involved.

Obtaining approval in principle to the concept gives the board or working group the authority to continue to explore and develop a merger proposal for consideration by the members. Being open and involving

members in discussions about the merger process may avoid unnecessary conflict and helps co-op members remain open to opportunities.

During a merger process, co-op leaders should foster an environment of mutual respect among those involved. And before any final approval is made, there must be full disclosure between all parties to identify and create a clear picture of the benefits and challenges resulting from a merger.

The evening of the official meeting to pass the special resolution ended in a combined gathering for the members of both Tri-Sack and Saduke. Members enjoyed getting to know one another, taking photos, sharing stories and celebrating their new start. Their celebratory cake read "Co-operation amongst co-operatives", something that they could all be proud of.

(Continued from page 1)

“There is a tendency to merge, but small can also work,” says Gail McNeil who is a board member of Halifax’s High Hopes Co-op. McNeil says she went to this year’s AGM “because I wanted a voice and I wanted to be heard, and I felt I was able to make (my) point,” she said.



*Nova Scotia delegates at CHF Canada’s annual meeting in London, Ontario.*

Aside from the meeting, there were a number of educational workshops which Riley, Enfield and McNeil all enjoyed. “I was very impressed with the quality of the workshops,” says Riley. In particular, they all learned about the 2020 Vision program and have already taken information back to their co-ops about planning for the future of their co-ops.

# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## Nova Scotia Fall Education Event

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2**

### **Holiday Inn Harbourview 101 Wyse Road, Dartmouth**

Come and meet other co-op members from around the province and gain valuable skills and knowledge!

For the first time we are offering three half-day sessions in both the morning and afternoon. For your morning workshop, choose from “What makes a good director and board?”; “What’s in your future—are you a 2020 co-op?” and “All about meetings”.

In the afternoon we are offering “Making policies work for you”; “What are you doing next year? Your co-op’s annual planning calendar” and “Reading financial statements”.

### **Sign up today and don’t miss out!**

For registration information, visit [www.chfcanada.coop](http://www.chfcanada.coop) or contact Debbie Hamilton at 1-866-213-2667 or [dhamilton@chfcanada.coop](mailto:dhamilton@chfcanada.coop).

## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

*Newsbriefs* is published by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.

Material may be copied. Please credit CHF Canada.

Story ideas, comments or questions? Call Debbie Hamilton at 1-866-213-2667 or email [dhamilton@chfcanada.coop](mailto:dhamilton@chfcanada.coop).

### **Editors**

Debbie Hamilton and Scott Jackson

### **Contributors**

Jeanene Harnett  
Karen Brodeur  
Leela Chinniah

### **Design**

Aerographics Creative Services  
[www.aerographics.com](http://www.aerographics.com)

### **Printing**

Cielo Print Inc.

### **Nova Scotia Office**

Suite 300, Tower 1  
202 Brownlow Ave.  
Dartmouth, NS B3B 1T5  
tel: 902.423.7119  
fax: 902.423.7058  
toll-free 1.866.213.2667  
[www.chfcanada.coop](http://www.chfcanada.coop)

