

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



# NewsBriefs

Nova Scotia Edition  
Winter 2010 Volume 9, No. 1

*Nova Scotia*

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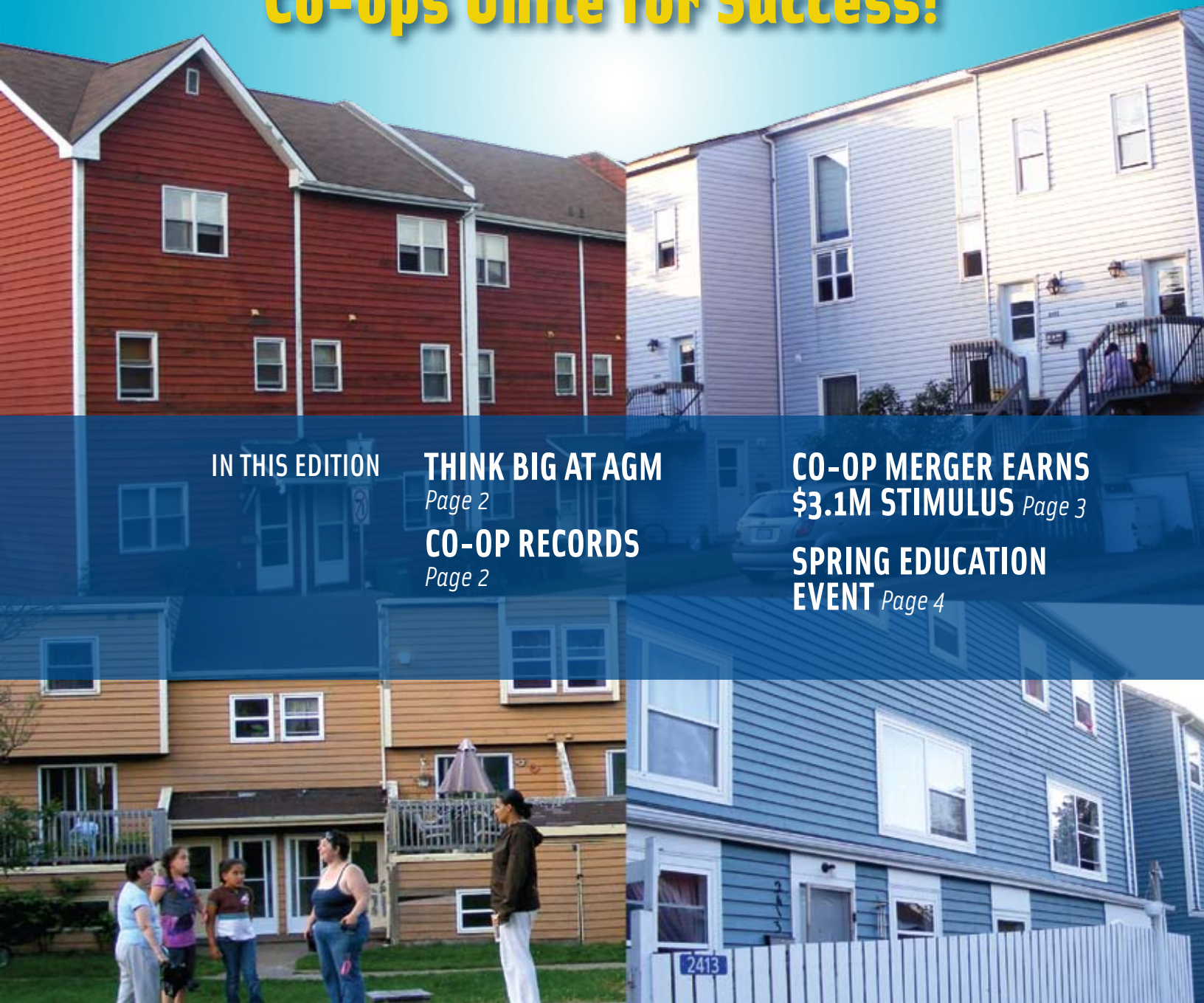
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## PROVINCIAL BURSARIES HELP YOU ATTEND AGM

Once again this year, Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services will be offering bursaries to Nova Scotia housing co-ops to assist in the costs of attending this year's AGM. This marks the eighth year that the Department has offered bursaries.

For Warren Olsen of DCS, the bursary is an investment in co-operative housing. "We are always happy to hear of co-ops wanting to take education and training to strengthen their governance structure. This is a great investment for the Department in that it goes to the ground level, and helps the board or member volunteers to strengthen their contributions to their community by the decisions and actions they take. Education is always a worthwhile investment."

At last year's AGM in Victoria, 17 members from 14 Nova Scotia co-ops took advantage of the DCS bursary program. This marks the highest participation since its inception.

Administration of the bursary program is handled by CHF Canada. Interested co-ops should contact Debbie Hamilton at 1.866.213.2667 or [dhamilton@chfcanda.coop](mailto:dhamilton@chfcanda.coop) as soon as possible to qualify for the bursaries. Maximum contributions are \$1,000 per member, and are based on the need and size of co-op.



### AT CHF CANADA'S JUNE 2010 ANNUAL MEETING!

**It's back! CHF Canada's Annual General Meeting comes alive June 9-12, 2010 in the sweet spring warmth of London, Ontario.**

This year, member co-ops will 'Think Big' at two Town Hall idea-sharing sessions: one on Scale in the Sector examines how co-ops could work together to make co-ops stronger, and Mission and Mandate where you will help modernize CHF Canada's role and vision.

We'll also 'Think Big' as in the Planet, with something we're calling The Green Spot, featuring ten great workshops on sustainability.

With over 30 workshops designed to give you the tools you need to ensure good governance, sound management and principled leadership in your co-op, the 2010 AGM is your ticket to best practices. Have your say at the National Business Meeting to help set CHF Canada's priorities and policies for the future.

And remember the Three R's: **Register** early, **Review** the reports and resolutions, and **Ready** yourself to have fun!

## STORAGE and DESTRUCTION of CO-OP RECORDS

Many co-ops are unsure of the rules about which records must be kept in storage and how long these records must be retained by the co-op before they can be destroyed.

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) describes records as "...accounting and other financial documents that are kept in an organized way." CRA tells us "your records have to provide enough details to determine your tax obligations and entitlements... and have to be supported by original documents." Every business – and your co-op is a business – must keep adequate records.

You have to keep all of the records and supporting documents required to complete your audit and tax return for a period of six years. CRA says "This six year period starts at the end of the tax year to which the records relate." This means records for a fiscal year ending in June, 2009 must be kept until July, 2015. For a fiscal year ending December, 2009 you would keep these records until at least January, 2016. If you want to destroy these documents before six years are over, you can fill out a form T137, 'Request for Destruction of Books and Records' and mail it to the Canada Revenue Agency.

(Continued on page 4)

# UNITED WE STAND

## Four Halifax co-ops merge, earning \$3.1 million stimulus – a model for co-ops across Canada

By Karen Brodeur

In the fall of 2008, CHF Canada approached four struggling housing co-operatives in the North end of Halifax about the possibility of strengthening their governance structure and their long term financial viability.

Anathoth Housing Co-operative, Charles Court Housing Co-operative, Jim MacDonald Housing Co-operative and Seaview Housing Co-operative had all been struggling over the last several years. The four co-ops agreed they needed a steering committee to explore the idea of a merger. The Steering Committee had one member from each of the four co-ops along with four community representatives.

With help from CHF Canada, the Steering Committee worked to secure much needed funding. They also began meeting with the members of the four communities to make sure every member understood the benefits of the four groups coming together as one, organizing three separate meetings to keep members informed and answer any questions.

The Steering Committee identified a number of advantages for the four co-ops to merge:

- stay a co-operative
- put the new co-op on a solid financial footing
- renovate homes
- achieve better administration and maintenance
- increase and strengthen member base.

In the summer of 2009, each of the four co-ops unanimously voted on a special resolution to merge together. They became the North End United Housing Co-op, now Nova Scotia's largest housing co-operative with 131 units. Co-op members chose the new name in a contest. Several members submitted suggestions, and the member who submitted the winning entry received a free month's housing charge.

North End United has received \$3.1 million from provincial and federal stimulus funds for capital repairs and energy-conserving modifications such as roofs, windows and doors.

In January 2010, the Honourable

**“It demonstrates that amalgamated co-ops are successful.”**

Denise Peterson-Rafuse declared in her first housing announcement as Community Services Minister, “These renovation and retrofit projects will improve the quality of life for residents by keeping their homes safe and affordable. We are happy to be able to support them and make life better for the families living in co-op communities.”

“Co-op mergers made this funding possible,” said CHF Canada President Ken Elliott “It demonstrates that amalgamated co-ops are successful.



*Michael Burke, a community member on the board of North End United and Margaret Brown, a longstanding member of Jim MacDonald Housing Co-op.*

This is a model that is working for co-op housing in Nova Scotia and can succeed in other areas as well.” Nova Scotia leads the country in co-operative housing mergers.

Renovations have now begun for the new co-operative. Margaret Brown, a longstanding co-op member, commented, “I just love the co-op, so that is why I think that it is very nice that it is getting fixed up.”

But this merger is about more than units being fixed; it's also about rejuvenating a co-operative community and strengthening its governance and leadership. As North End United President Jonathan Hannam stated, “it's not only the bricks and mortar, but it's renewing the spirit of the housing co-op.”

*Community Services Minister Denise Peterson-Rafuse speaks with MP Scott Armstrong (middle) and Ken Elliott, president of CHF Canada. Photo credit: Communications Nova Scotia*



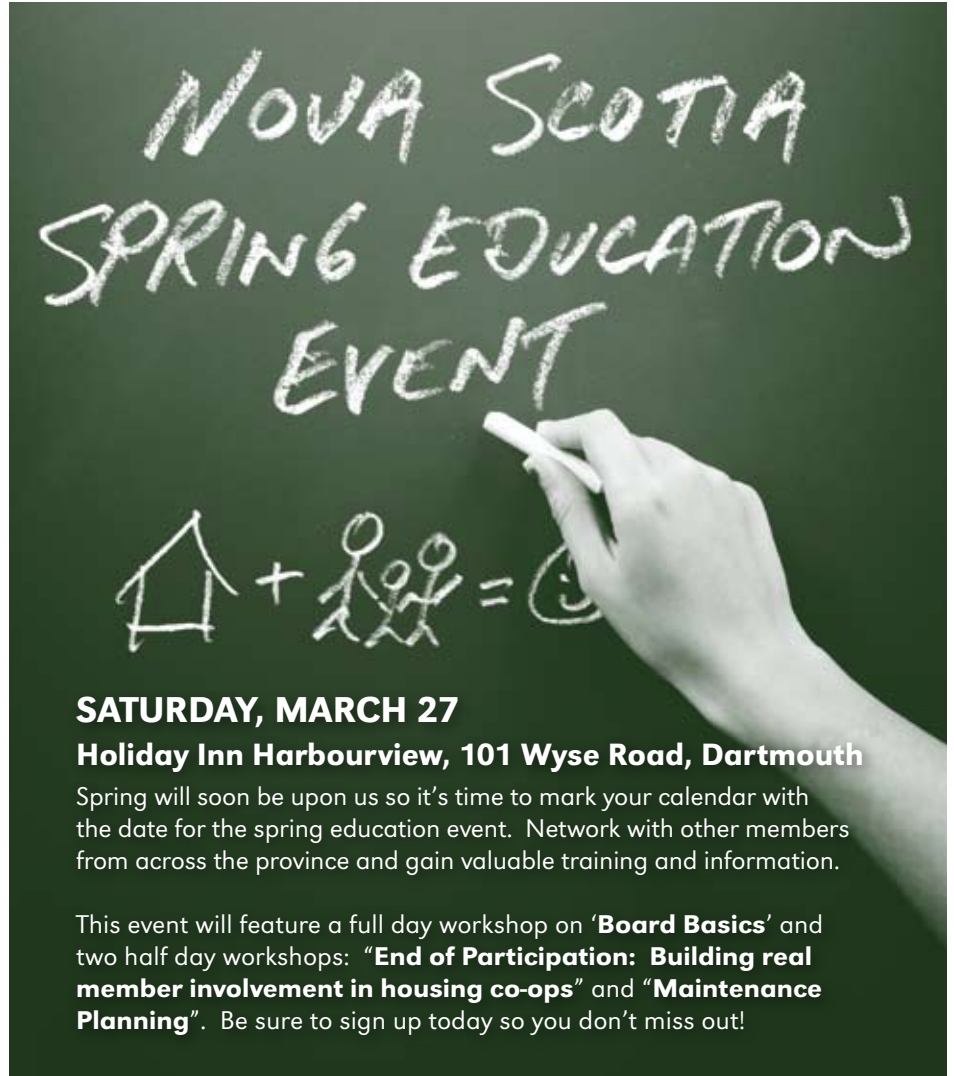
(Co-op Records, continued from page 2)

Other records, such as minutes, by-laws, and building plans must be kept indefinitely. This covers any information that would have an impact upon the sale or liquidation of your co-op.

All your records must be kept at your place of business unless permission is given by CRA to store them somewhere else. They must be available for review by CRA officials at any time. They must be reliable and complete and be supported by original documents.

When making the decision to destroy old records, you should plan to shred or incinerate them. You can have a shredding company come to your site for a very reasonable cost. They will allow you to watch the destruction of the records, and give you a certificate of destruction at the end of the process.

You can obtain more information on this topic by visiting the Canada Revenue Agency website at [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/kprc/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/kprc/menu-eng.html)



**NOVA SCOTIA  
SPRING EDUCATION  
EVENT**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 27**  
**Holiday Inn Harbourview, 101 Wyse Road, Dartmouth**

Spring will soon be upon us so it's time to mark your calendar with the date for the spring education event. Network with other members from across the province and gain valuable training and information.

This event will feature a full day workshop on **'Board Basics'** and two half day workshops: **"End of Participation: Building real member involvement in housing co-ops"** and **"Maintenance Planning"**. Be sure to sign up today so you don't miss out!

## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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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**  
Karen Brodeur  
Cindy Long

**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)

**On the cover:** Pictured are the four co-ops that merged to form North End United Housing Co-operative in Halifax (see story on page 3).