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Above: Highfield Park's board of directors, pictured from left, Jeanene Harnett (CHF Canada regional director), Simon Odamtten (external member), Nellie Clyde, Shelley Burgess (Community Housing Management Network), Julie Shields and Angela Simpson.



HIGHFIELD PARK BRINGS HOME AWARD FOR BEST PRACTICES

By Debbie Hamilton

Highfield Park Housing Co-op was recognized at this year's CHF Canada Annual Meeting, receiving the 2011



Award for Best Practices in Co-op Governance and Management, which recognizes their program for mentoring and coaching.

Prior to 2009, Highfield Park had many issues—a high vacancy rate, poor building quality, high member turnover, lack of education for new members and a lack of strong leadership. There were issues with drugs in the community and the board of directors was having great difficulty dealing with this. They were afraid of the growing number of people “hanging out” in their immediate neighbourhood. In addition, board members were making decisions individually and not as a cohesive group.

Today's Highfield Park is a completely different co-op. They have hired new management, created an annual plan, revamped policies, and are working with members to rebuild their community. Arrears are now at an all time low, members are coming to meetings again, regular board and general membership meetings are being held and members have taken back their neighbourhood. This 60-unit co-op has now received funding and made numerous capital repairs.

There is a new board in place, consisting of three internal members and three external members. The three external members, along with

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Greetings from Your Regional Director

First, I would like to thank Nova Scotia members for electing me as your regional director for a second term. Here is a brief update on what has happened since my last report.

Congratulations to **Highfield Park Housing Co-op** in Dartmouth for receiving CHF Canada's Best Practices Award for innovative work establishing a well-run and maintained co-op.

With the help of the **Department of Community Services' Bursary Program**, we were able to send delegates to CHF Canada's Annual Meeting in St. John's. Once again, this was one of the largest delegations from across Canada. I would like to thank Sheryl Kingston and her team for their hard work and dedication to the co-op movement.

In June, I attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Co-operative

Association in Halifax. Their main focus is to create and strengthen connections among co-operators across Canada, regardless of sector, language or geography. During this meeting, I was elected to the board of the **Nova Scotia Co-operative Council**, and I look forward to strengthening the relationship between housing co-ops and other forms of co-operatives in Nova Scotia. Another highlight of this meeting was a presentation regarding the International Year of Co-operatives, which begins in January 2012. In coming months, I look forward to touching base with members to see how we are going to present ourselves and support IYC.

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



CHF Canada Nova Scotia Regional Director **Jeanene Harnett** delivers greetings to the Nova Scotia Co-op Council AGM.

I enjoyed my first term 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!



NEWS BRIEFS

WHAT'S IN A MEMBER HANDBOOK?

By Karen Brodeur

Most co-ops give new members information about the co-op and the community when they move in. Co-ops call this information the member handbook. It can be a valuable resource for members who are new to the co-op and new to the community.

All the bylaws and policies are part of the member handbook. It is helpful to review these bylaws and policies during the new member orientation. Co-ops may also provide information about other things such as local services and emergency procedures.

Here is a list of content you may want to put in your member handbook:

- the Co-op Act and Residential Tenancies Act
- bylaws, policies and procedures
- list of co-op board members
- co-op phone list
- co-op organization chart
- information about committees
- the co-op principles
- meeting rules
- information about CHF Canada
- community information
- map of the local area
- local transit map and schedule
- information about MemberGuard insurance

- other community information that might be helpful
- maintenance information
- explanation of the work order system
- sample unit inspection form
- emergency contact information
- where to find water shut off valves
- how to dispose of garbage and recycling

When creating or updating your member handbook, be sure that the information is written in plain language.

Traditionally, the member handbook has been a binder. Now, some co-ops have their member handbooks available online on the co-op website. This helps avoid the challenge of keeping each member's binder current and getting them back when members move out. If you still prefer to use a binder, some co-ops include member handbook updates as part of annual unit inspections, while others have volunteers who check handbooks during move outs so that the co-op is sure new members get a complete, current version.

Whatever approach you take to your member handbook and whatever information you include, remember that a member handbook is a helpful tool to getting governance right.

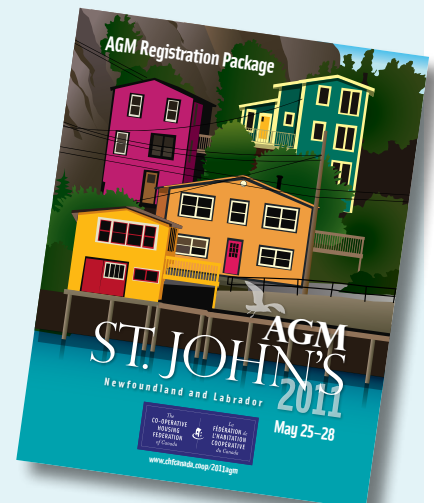
PROVINCIAL BURSARY PROGRAM BOOSTS AGM ATTENDANCE

Nova Scotia's housing co-ops sent a record 21 representatives to CHF Canada's Annual Meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador in May.

"We worked hard. I attended a full day workshop—both the instructor and the topic were fabulous," says Dale Slawter, delegate from Central Dartmouth Housing Co-op. "There's always something new to learn, and at our board meeting two weeks after I got back I was able to bring lots of information to the meeting".

Thanks to bursaries funded by Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services, members like Dale were able to attend and make contact with people from across the country.

"The wonderful part of the AGM was meeting and interacting with other co-op members," says Doris Hall of Halifax Peninsula Housing Co-op. "Meeting the locals was also a treat!"



SPECIAL YEARS FOR CO-OP HOUSING

Did you know that both 2011 and 2012 have special significance for Canada's housing co-ops?



2011 is the Year of Getting Governance Right, as designated by CHF Canada and regional co-op housing federations across the country. Co-ops are being encouraged to take steps to strengthen co-op governance using special tools and resources developed by CHF Canada, including online learning programs such as Board Basics Online.



2012 will be the International Year of Co-operatives as designated by the United Nations. Canada's co-operative movement aims to use 2012 to raise awareness and support for co-ops under the slogan "Co-operative enterprises build a better world". CHF Canada members passed a resolution in May encouraging housing co-ops to celebrate and promote 2012 in their communities.



For more information, visit www.chfcanada.coop.

Highfield Park *continued from page 2*

a coach, have worked closely with the co-op's leadership to strengthen governance.

The Award for Best Practices in Co-op Governance and Management was created in 2005 when members adopted a resolution to create an award to share and celebrate co-op successes. The award recognizes innovative new ideas or original

approaches that reflect the core management standards, which are found in the CHF Canada's publications: *Getting Governance Right*, *Getting Management Right* and *Getting Our Co-op Principles Right*.

Congratulations to the board and members of Highfield Park Housing Co-op!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE FALL EDUCATION EVENT!

**NOVA SCOTIA
FALL EDUCATION EVENT
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29TH**

*Holiday Inn Harbourview
101 Wyse Road, Dartmouth*

Meet other co-op members from around the province and gain valuable skills and knowledge. This event offers three half-day sessions in the morning, and in the afternoon you will choose two of six mini workshops—each an hour and a half in length. Workshop topics include the residential tenancy process, chairing meetings, reading financial statements, leadership renewal, what makes a good board, board decision making, meeting SHARP conditions and more. Look for all the details online or in the Fall Education Event brochure sent to your co-op in early September.

Sign up today and don't miss out.

For registration information, visit www.chfcanada.coop or contact Debbie Hamilton at 1.866.213.2667 or dhamilton@chfcanada.coop

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