

Co-op Housing News

An e-bulletin for municipal service managers

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New Downloading Details

[*Downloading Details, #23, Downloading and member selection*](#), was sent to co-ops in July. The *Social Housing Reform Act* (SHRA) introduced new rules for member selection. These rules create different criteria and procedures for RGI and market households. This *Downloading Details* helps co-ops understand how the SHRA affects member selection and how co-ops can change their member selection process to work with the new rules.

Watch for our next *Downloading Details*, which will review the recent changes to the SHRA regulations.

Co-op housing education events

Looking for training opportunities for co-ops in your area? CHF Canada is offering education days this fall in Barrie, [Sudbury](#), [London](#) and [Kingston](#). Topics include:

- The *Social Housing Reform Act* for co-op boards
- Getting and keeping good management
- Being a successful board member
- The *PIPED Act* – what's the experience to date?
- The future is now – beginning to plan for the end of the operating agreement
- Eviction law reform in Ontario
- Vacancies can kill your co-op

- Beyond unit inspections: Getting the repairs done

Local federations also offer education programs in many parts of the province. If there is a co-op federation in your area, get in touch with them to find out about workshops in your region.

Where's Home? 2004: A Picture of Housing Needs in Ontario

CHF Canada's Ontario Region and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association recently released a new report entitled [*Where's Home? 2004: A Picture of Housing Needs in Ontario*](#). The study shows that, despite a recent rise in rental vacancy rates in several Ontario municipalities, more than one-half million Ontarians are without affordable housing. Read the [media release](#) and [tight new rental markets](#), as well as the full report.

Dealing with new benchmarks

In August the Ontario Region sent out a *Bulletin* to Ontario-program co-ops about recent developments in the benchmarking process. [Bulletin 15](#) is on the Members' Network on the CHF Canada website.

A number of service managers have held information meetings for providers and Ontario Region staff have attended many of these meetings. Ontario Region staff also participate on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Benchmarking Advisory Team.

There are still many unknown issues related to the new benchmarking system, but the Ontario Region is encouraging service managers to share information with co-ops and to consult widely. Where service managers have sent co-ops their draft benchmarks, the Ontario Region is encouraging co-ops to share the information with us so we can analyze the data to see the effect on the co-op's financial situation.

Ontario Region annual meeting

Almost 500 delegates, alternates, staff and observers gathered in Quebec City for the 2004 Ontario Region annual meeting, the national AGM and a full program of workshops June 8-13. The Ontario meeting is always held in conjunction with the national meeting of CHF Canada, which moves from city to city across the country.

Invited guest speaker, the **Honourable John Gerretsen**, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, was unable to attend but sent a letter of greeting to the meeting. In the letter, read to the meeting by Ontario Council President **Lori-Anne McDonald**, he said, "The CHF model is to be admired and I assure you that this government wants to see housing co-operatives continue to succeed as member-controlled communities that play an important role in providing Ontarians affordable housing."

Delegates passed three resolutions that set the focus for the work of the Ontario Region in the year ahead.

Resolution R1, Eviction Law Reform, sets out the next steps in changing the law on co-op housing evictions so it works better for co-ops and members.

The **second resolution, Fair Property Taxes for Housing Co-ops**, asks the Ontario Region to look into ways to reduce property taxes for housing co-ops.

The **final resolution, Time for Action on Co-op Housing**, sets the direction for an intensified campaign of all Ontario housing co-ops to convince the new provincial government that it's time for action on the two key issues of concern to Ontario co-ops:

- fixing the *Social Housing Reform Act*, and
- changing the federal/provincial Affordable Housing Program so that it works for co-ops.

A number of service manager representatives attended the meetings as registered participants, workshop presenters or guests.

Members and co-op staff regularly report that one of the most valuable parts of the annual meeting is the program of workshops offered during the week. This year's Member Education Forum featured over 60 workshops for co-op members. Co-op staff could upgrade their skills at the Staff Development Conference with almost 30 workshops. Both sets of workshops had a special stream for Ontario-program co-ops.

For a complete report on the annual meeting, visit the [annual meeting pages](#) of our website.

Next year, the annual meeting will be held in Edmonton from June 15 to 18. We hope to see you there.

Eviction law reform

Co-ops are working to reform the eviction process for Ontario housing co-ops. At the last two Ontario Region annual meetings, delegates passed resolutions calling for the Ontario Region to work to change the eviction process.

Evictions in co-ops follow a different process than the one used by tenants and landlords under the *Tenant Protection Act*. The *Co-operative Corporations Act* sets out a detailed process involving the board, the members and finally the court. There is a lot of legal uncertainty about the process with different judges taking different approaches. For this and other reasons the eviction process in co-ops is costly and cumbersome for co-ops and members, and at times can end up being unfair.

This spring, the Ontario Region submitted a brief to the Province proposing that evictions be handled through a co-op tribunal set up as a separate part of the Rental Housing Tribunal. A copy of the [executive summary](#) is on the Members' Network of our website.

The Ontario Region is working with the Ministry of Finance, the ministry responsible for administering the *Co-operative Corporations Act*, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the proposed changes.

Ontario Council meets with Housing Minister

A delegation from the Ontario Council of CHF Canada's Ontario Region met with Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the **Honourable John Gerretsen**, on June 1. The Council used the meeting to

- introduce the Minister to housing co-ops
- press for changes to the *Social Housing Reform Act* and an early release of the funding benchmarks
- ask for his support for our proposals on eviction law reform and building more affordable housing.

Council members felt that it was a very positive meeting and were encouraged by the Minister's promise to meet again in the near future to talk about fixing the *Social Housing Reform Act*.

For a report on the meeting, go to the [Provincial Issues 2004](#) area of our website.

National agency incorporated

There has been much progress on CHF Canada's proposal to transfer administration of federal-program co-ops from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to a new independent, non-government agency. The federal government has approved the transfer and work is being done to set up the agency and prepare it to take on the administration of federal-program co-ops.

The new national agency was incorporated on July 28 as the Co-operative Housing Programs Administration Agency. On August 9, the founding board of directors had its first meeting.

In order to get the new agency up and running CHF Canada's Executive Director Alexandra Wilson is working on special assignment until March 1, 2005. During this time, Nicholas Gazzard, CHF Canada's Director, Sector Development is the Acting Executive Director.

It is expected that the agency will begin to administer federal-program co-ops in the fall of next year.

Members' Network: a good source of information

One of the benefits of being an organizational associate of CHF Canada is access to the Members' Network on our website. This area has education materials and management tools such as *Downloading Details*, model by-laws, information on education events and other resources to help members run their co-ops.

To give you an example of the kind of resources posted in the Members' Network, we have attached to this bulletin one of the management tools currently featured, "Keeping your co-op full when vacancy rates are rising".

Registered users also receive CHF Canada's newest electronic publication eNEWS.

To register for the Members' Network, log on to the CHF Canada website and go to the [Members' Network](#). You will be asked to provide some information including the name of your organization to confirm that you work for an associate of CHF Canada.

If you are not an associate and are interested in joining, send an e-mail to info@chfc.ca or call the Ontario Region at 416-366-1711 and ask for information on how to join.

Ontario Region moves office

The Ontario Region office moved at the end of August. Phone numbers, extensions and e-mail addresses remain the same. Our new address is: 313-720 Spadina Avenue, Toronto ON M5S 2T9.