

## **2011 Government Relations Report**

In 2011, CHF Canada's national government relations efforts raised key policy concerns of the co-operative housing movement in federal and provincial capitals across the country.

Throughout the year, CHF Canada's primary objective was to provide leadership for the housing policy goals established by its members.

### **FEDERAL:**

In 2011, CHF Canada sought support from the federal government to:

- 1. Ensure that cost-shared federal dollars reduce housing need by getting the provinces and territories to create new affordable housing, including co-op homes;**
- 2. Ensure that vulnerable Canadians can continue to afford their housing in co-op, non-profit and municipal housing after federal operating agreements end; and**
- 3. Continue to invest in urban infrastructure and affordable housing, through the enhancement of existing programs and new rental housing tax incentives.**

### Federal Election

Prior to the May 2 federal election, CHF Canada was in a constant state of election preparedness. The threat of a spring election meant that staff had to be prepared for a campaign to get co-ops' key federal issues front and centre when the election writ was dropped.

CHF Canada's goals for the federal election campaign were to seek each party's promise to **work to protect co-op affordability for low-income Canadians**, and **push for federal action to build more affordable co-op homes**. Party campaign pledges on federal housing issues ranged from promising to enact a private member's bill to create a national housing strategy (NDP) to providing a one-year extension of the ecoENERGY retrofit program which expired on March 31, 2011 (Conservatives).

During the campaign, CHF Canada got the word out on its key national government relations goals through meet and greets and co-op delegation visits with federal candidates in closely contested ridings.

CHF Canada communicated our election messaging using media including a new federal election blog. Media interviews with CHF Canada's Executive Director Nicholas Gazzard were held with major and medium-sized radio markets in Vancouver, Victoria, St. Catharines and the Maritimes. As for the former, *Inside Co-op Housing* (which can still be accessed at [www.chfcanadablog.com](http://www.chfcanadablog.com)) featured 10 entries by various representatives from CHF Canada, CHF BC and CHFT. CHF Canada's online election campaign through [www.chfcanada.coop/election](http://www.chfcanada.coop/election) provided members and supporters with various ways to stay informed about housing-related federal election issues. For example, the website featured federal party commitments for affordable housing and links to party websites for online users to access during the length of the campaign.

### Affordable Housing Framework

On July 4, CHF Canada welcomed the announcement of the new federal-provincial-territorial Affordable Housing Framework (AHF) for 2011-14. For over two years, CHF Canada lobbied for transparent accountability for federal housing spending. The new AHF requires that governments aim to both **reduce housing need** and **increase the supply of affordable housing**.

The AHF, which affects provinces and territories that have existing agreements under the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), calls on governments to “be accountable to the public for the use of public funds through an open and transparent process which identifies expected outcomes, measures performance, reports on results to the public and provides for follow-up.” It also requires governments to report “annually to the public regarding the investments and achievement of intended outcomes.”

Because the new 2011-14 federal-provincial-territorial agreements under the AHF will include accountability measures for reducing the number of Canadians in housing need, CHF Canada welcomed it with a positive media release. The release included the following cautionary statement: “Now, it’s up to all levels of government to ensure that the framework targets housing need reduction across all demographics – including seniors, working families, single parents and new Canadians – in their respective jurisdictions.”

On September 13, 2011, CHF Canada received a letter on the AHF from Minister Finley. The letter thanked CHF Canada for its help in creating the AHF. The final paragraph from Minister Finley’s letter stated: “I would like to express my appreciation for the information CHF Canada has shared with us in the past, which has not only informed our recent work and discussions, but will also inform our future work. Our Government remains committed to working with partners, including CHF Canada, to address the broad spectrum of affordable housing needs.”

### Canada Revenue Agency

CHF Canada had positive meetings (in September and December) with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) officials about a troubling initiative to reconsider the tax-exempt status of non-profit housing providers (including housing co-ops) and non-profits as a whole that rely on Section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* for their tax-exempt status.

CHF Canada’s national government relations team arranged a meeting with senior staff for the Minister of National Revenue. In a July 14 edition of eNEWS, member co-ops were informed about the meeting and CHF Canada’s efforts to ensure that co-ops and other non-profit housing providers are protected from paying corporate taxes on their revenue-generating activities, especially those required or encouraged by governments.

Discussions continue between CHF Canada, other housing associations and CRA.

## **PROVINCIAL:**

### Provincial Elections

CHF Canada encouraged co-ops in the fall to get involved in provincial election campaigns in Prince Edward Island (October 3), Manitoba (October 4), Ontario (October 6), Newfoundland and Labrador (October 11) and Saskatchewan (November 7).

The new AHF provided opportunities for co-ops to speak with candidates and their parties in the above-noted provinces about building more housing co-ops and maintaining affordability for low-income households. With the goal of getting these messages out, CHF Canada created household cards for the five fall elections. Co-op housing questionnaires were also mailed out to party leaders to ask for their support for these key issues.

### Ontario

Ontario Region ran a very active campaign under the theme of “Co-op Housing Makes a Difference” and reported quite regularly to the Ontario Council on the provincial election and Ontario government relations in general.

### Manitoba

While there were several highlights (in terms of positive feedback regarding CHF Canada’s issues), the Manitoba election provided co-ops with some notable announcements.

For example, the Manitoba NDP’s response to our election questionnaire included a plan for co-ops that are facing the end of their operating agreements with the provincial government. The letter noted that: “In June [2011] we announced under our All Aboard poverty-reduction strategy that we are increasing support to existing non-profit and co-operative housing organizations with expiring mortgages. This will protect hundreds of low-income households who rely on soon-to-expire assistance for part of their rents.”

During the year, CHF Canada’s national government relations staff worked closely with the Manitoba government and Manitoba Housing on several new initiatives affecting housing co-operatives.

### Prince Edward Island

During the PEI election campaign, Liberal Leader (Premier Robert Ghiz) sent us a letter indicating that his government has been trying to work with the federal government to address the ending of operating agreements for co-ops in his province. His letter expresses an intention to work aggressively on a shared federal-provincial responsibility approach to meeting the future housing needs of Islanders.

**Annex - Federal Meetings 2011**

***National Government Relations Meetings with Members of Parliament and Ministerial Staff***

<b>Date and Location</b>	<b>MP/Federal Official</b>	<b>Subject(s)</b>
January 13, 2011 Ottawa , ON	The Honourable Diane Finley, the Minister responsible for CMHC (Conservative Member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk, ON)	Direct Lending and Results for new Accountability Framework
June 23, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Connor Robinson, Director of Policy for the Minister of National Revenue, the Honourable Gail Shea (Conservative Member of Parliament for Egmont, PEI)	Section of the <i>Income Tax Act</i>  (CRA issue)
August 18, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Dan Harris, NDP Member of Parliament for Scarborough—Southwest, ON	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework
August 31, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Marie-Claude Morin, NDP Housing Critic and Member of Parliament for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, QC	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework
August 31, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Ryan Greer, Senior Policy Advisor for the Minister responsible for CMHC and  Daniel Kosick, Policy Advisor for the Minister responsible for CMHC	Briefing on issues related to CMHC
October 3, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Rathika Sitsabaiesan, NDP Member of Parliament for Scarborough—Rouge River, ON	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework
October 3, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Ed Komarnicki, Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) and Conservative Member of Parliament for Souris—Moose Mountain, SK	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework

<p>October 3, 2011 Ottawa, ON</p>	<p>Bernard Trottier, Conservative Member of Parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, ON</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework</p>
<p>October 4, 2011 Ottawa, ON</p>	<p>Kevin Lamoureux, Liberal Member of Parliament for Winnipeg North, MB</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework</p>
<p>October 5, 2011 Ottawa, ON</p>	<p>Colin Mayes, Member of HUMA and Conservative Member of Parliament for Okanagan—Shuswap, BC</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework</p>
<p>October 26, 2011 Ottawa, ON</p>	<p>The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, Liberal Member of Parliament for Ottawa—Vanier, ON</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework</p>
<p>November 10, 2011 William Punnett Housing Co-operative Inc. Etobicoke, ON</p>	<p>Bernard Trottier, Conservative Member of Parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, ON</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies</p>
<p>November 21, 2011 Ottawa, ON</p>	<p>Brad Butt, Member of HUMA and Conservative Member of Parliament for Mississauga—Streetsville, ON</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework</p>
<p>November 28, 2011 Ottawa, ON</p>	<p>Matthew Kellway, NDP Member of Parliament for Beaches—East York, ON</p>	<p>End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework</p>

December 5, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Andrew Cash, NDP Deputy Housing Critic and Member of Parliament for Davenport, ON	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework
December 6, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Mike Sullivan, NDP Member of Parliament for York South—Weston, ON	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework
December 13, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Jay Aspin, Conservative Member of Parliament for Nipissing—Timiskaming, ON	End of RGI Subsidies, New Rental Housing Tax Incentives and Results for new Accountability Framework

***Federal Events***

<b>Date and Location</b>	<b>Event</b>
October 20, 2011 Ottawa, ON	Testified at a House of Commons Finance Committee 2012 federal budget consultation meeting.
December 7, 2011 Toronto, ON	Co-hosted a public presentation with CHFT and CHFBC titled “What happens to housing charge subsidies at the end of the operating agreement?”