

# Newsbriefs

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## Stonetown Housing Co-op completes fire safety retrofit



Stonetown Housing Co-op is built with an old-style brick like the historic limestone that gave St. Mary's the nickname of "Stonetown." The co-op hopes to have all but one unit filled by November 15.



2

Stonetown Housing Co-op completes fire safety retrofit

3

New co-op breaks ground in London

3

Vote for co-op housing on October 14

# Stonetown Housing Co-op completes fire safety retrofit

**O**n Christmas Eve, 2004, **Stonetown Housing Co-op** in St. Mary's had its first fire. The co-op was 14 years old and the fire was contained to one unit. No one was hurt, the damage was repaired and new members moved in. A year later, another fire in another part of the co-op spread between units and damaged an entire townhouse block of five homes.

Early the next spring, the St. Mary's Fire Chief let the co-op know that the Ontario Superior Court of Justice had ordered the co-op to upgrade all their units to comply with current fire codes.

By this time only 17 of the co-op's 30 units were occupied and the co-op was suffering from the lost revenue. They applied for additional funding from CMHC. Their mortgage holder ordered a professional engineering investigation. The end of that year, 2006, the engineers reported the co-op had inadequate firewall separation and faulty wiring throughout their buildings.

By June of 2007, only ten units were occupied. To keep the co-op functioning, the members approved a by-law to allow external members to sit on the co-op board. Along with four of the co-op members, they brought in three experienced external members to sit on the board.

**Rebecca Clothier** is one of the new board members. "I live in Perth County but I work for London and Middlesex County and because I live in a separate community I am able to be independent."

The co-op got a joint workout loan funded by CMHC and the Stabilization Fund. By September 2007, the co-op started remedial work with a plan to have repairs finished in six months.

By November there were only five occupied units. And by April of this year, 2008, there were only four. Work was delayed. Many units were now without hydro or gas because of non-payment. In June, the co-op's property manager resigned. But in July things began to turn around. The co-op got occupancy permits for the first two blocks of townhouses with 11 units ready and they began an advertising campaign. Responses started to flow in.

Clothier is impressed with the progress. "Since June 30 when we had no applications, we will have 50 percent full by the end of September and all but one filled by November 15 – if the construction is complete, and all filled by November 30. To have them fully rented so quickly – it's great."

## Did you know?

- Fire damage was the most common insurance claim (40 percent) for co-ops from 2002-2007
- Most of these claims could have been prevented
- A risk management workshop was part of the fall education event.

### You can manage fire risk for your co-op

- o Do you have a fire-safety team or someone designated to make sure your co-op is fire-safe?
- o Have you identified all fire safety tasks and developed a committee to make sure the work gets done?
- o Have you educated your membership on fire safety?
- o Do you have a fire emergency plan?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, you can start now to reduce your risks:

- o **To find out more** see your Risk Management Kit (if your co-op is part of CHF Canada's commercial insurance program with the Co-operators)
- o **See our Newsbriefs Risk Management supplement**  
[www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pdf?NB/NB2007-12\\_supplement.pdf](http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pdf?NB/NB2007-12_supplement.pdf)
- o **Check out fire-safety sites like:**  
[www.safety-council.org/info/home/homefire.htm](http://www.safety-council.org/info/home/homefire.htm)
- o **Invite your local Fire Department.** They can help you review your emergency plan, check for fire hazards and make sure your co-op obeys all fire safety laws and maintains your fire safety systems.

# NEW CO-OP BREAKS GROUND IN LONDON

**Bob Sexsmith**, president of **Twin Pine Village** helped turn the sod to kick off the building of a new 26-unit co-op in London this August. Sexsmith, who is also the president of the new **Huron Pines Housing Co-op**, was behind the efforts to build the co-op on property next to Twin Pine Village.

Those efforts paid off with funding of \$1.8 million under the Canada – Ontario Affordable Housing Program. London Affordable Housing Foundation also

partnered with the co-op to make sure four of the 26 units are fully accessible.

“It was six months of frustration,” says Sexsmith. Unlike the days before the early 1990s, when there were plenty of groups working on co-op development, Sexsmith - and anyone who wants to build a co-op - had to pull together his own resources and work through several levels of government.

“I have a whole team, a planner, an engineer, a contractor, a developer, and a lawyer that I put together to develop the project. And we were able to actually make a difference that is going to benefit the building of Huron Pines.”

Bob Sexsmith (Huron Pines), Bev Shipley MP (Lambton-Kent Middlesex) and City of London Mayor Anne Marie De Cicco-Best turn the first shovels of sod to mark the beginning of construction of the new housing co-op, Huron Pines, in London this August



Southwestern Ontario members at annual meeting in Toronto, (R to L) Brenda Higgins, Tonya Clark, Peter Geraci, Angela Pellerin, Pam Elson and Amy Talbot

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

CHF Canada annual meeting – May 28 – 30, 2009  
It is not too early to start planning to attend CHF Canada's next Annual General Meeting.

The annual meeting is an opportunity to meet with co-operators from across the country. It will offer invaluable workshops with the information your co-op needs. CHF Canada's next annual meeting will take place in Victoria, BC from May 28 to May 30, 2009.

Mark your calendars and watch for registration information coming early in 2009.

## Vote for co-op housing on October 14

The federal election on Tuesday, October 14 gives housing co-op members a chance to elect a government that will take action on affordable housing and help the four million Canadians who need an affordable home. Get involved. Visit [www.chfcanada.coop/action](http://www.chfcanada.coop/action).

**Don't miss out on a special marketing workshop in Windsor:**

Free to members of CHF Canada, this workshop will show you how to develop a successful marketing plan for your co-op to make sure you fill your vacancies. The Agency for Co-operative Housing will be showing you a new tool to help with your marketing.

Saturday October 18th from 9 am to 3 pm  
At the Caboto Club  
2175 Parent Avenue, Windsor

To sign up contact Denise McGahan at 1-800-644-3949 or email: [dmcgahan@chfcanada.coop](mailto:dmcgahan@chfcanada.coop).

**New book celebrates 40 years of co-op housing history**

*Under Construction: a history of co-operative housing in Canada* is a new book that shows how a small but determined group of people formed a co-operative housing movement that now stretches across Canada. Written by Leslie Cole, the book is available through CHF Canada's Ottawa office. Books are \$19.95 paperback and \$39.95 hardcover, plus taxes and shipping. Use the order form included on our website at [www.chfcanada.coop](http://www.chfcanada.coop). Contact Louise Briglio at 1-800-465-2752, ext. 224 or [lbriglio@chfcanada.coop](mailto:lbriglio@chfcanada.coop) for more information.



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