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*Above: On July 8, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to celebrate the development of Southwestern Ontario's newest housing co-op, **Four Feathers**. Once completed, the co-op, developed thanks to generous funding from Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services and the City of London, will consist of 25 units to accommodate Aboriginal singles, couples or families. Pictured, left to right, are Ann Smith, Kendra Brant, CHF Canada Director Dorothy Eisen, Vanessa Abram, CHF Canada Ontario Council Member Roxane Samms, and Four Feathers President Lloyd (Butch) Stevenson.*



Medway Earns Rare Low Risk Rating

By Sara Hanson

Medway Housing Co-op in London recently made history after becoming the first co-op in Southwestern Ontario to receive a low risk rating by the Agency for Co-operative Housing.

Cathy Lundy, who serves as the corporate secretary on Medway's board, says the announcement came as a great surprise to members. "We were told that no co-op ever receives that rating, but we've always tried to keep the co-op in good shape and we're very conscious that everything is well taken care of for our members."

Risk rating is the Agency's technique for determining the stability of a co-op and measuring its financial strength. All federal co-ops are evaluated each year and receive a risk rating of either low, moderate, above average or high. A risk rating of low or moderate is intended to encourage the best run co-ops to keep up the good work, while a rating of high signals serious difficulties requiring immediate attention.

Linda McClure was the manager of Medway for 22 years before retiring in 2010. She credits the co-op's achievement, in part, to having a strong board that practices good governance. "The board hasn't been afraid to run the co-op like a business. They have always recommended things that are in the best interest of the co-op, even though some things were a hard sell to members, such as housing charge increases."

Scott Wylie, the co-op's relationship manager at the Agency, gives credit to the combined efforts of McClure and the co-op's current manager, Sandi Enns, as well as a forward thinking membership. "Careful consideration of the direction the co-op is taking as a business has given Medway the opportunity to not only fulfill the mandate of providing first-class affordable housing, but also achieve all those other things co-ops strive to create, such as a caring and compassionate community."



Medway's achievement is an example of how good governance and strong management work together to create a healthy co-op community. Members play an active role through the capital repairs committee and when the day-to-day maintenance of the co-op became too much, the board hired a part-time handy man. "The board has always had a good attitude towards keeping the maintenance up," says McClure.

With the low risk rating secured, the board is now focused on maintaining the affordability of their co-op homes. "We have to keep our reserves up because we are coming close to the end of our operating agreement," says Lundy. "We need to ensure the building is in good working order for the future."

CHF Canada Program Manager for Member Services in Southwestern Ontario, Denise McGahan, says Medway's achievement can serve as inspiration for other co-ops. "CHF Canada congratulates the members, board and staff at Medway for their hard work that has led to this important milestone. Hopefully we will see other co-ops in Southwestern Ontario join Medway in meeting this high standard in the near future."

CHF CANADA AGM 'LIVES UP TO THE HYPE'

After hearing such good things about CHF Canada's Annual Meeting, I had high expectations. The agenda was impressive, featuring a range of topics, from being a good director to making your co-op a better place for all members. I expected to be overwhelmed and entertained with lots of learning and fun.

Today, I'm happy to report that the Annual Meeting lived up to the hype. The organization and management of events was top notch. Sessions went deep under the surface and attendees were kind, infinitely interesting and always open to meet and hang out with someone new. I learned a lot, met amazing people and made incredible business contacts. I've

come back home with renewed motivation and a long list of project ideas that will fuel my involvement with my co-op for this year and beyond.



Marty Peterson
in St. John's.

Marty Peterson
Sills Landing Housing Co-op,
Strathroy, ON



WESTMINSTER CO-OP IMPROVES GOVERNANCE THROUGH EDUCATION

Last year, **Westminster Housing Co-op** in London elected four new directors who had no prior experience sitting on a board. To help these directors learn about their new roles, the co-op's president, Zuleyma Vasquez, decided they should all attend CHF Canada's Fall Education Event for co-ops in Southwestern Ontario. She says: "The event really helped the new directors understand their duties and responsibilities and how to act as a board."

The directors also benefited from the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other co-ops. "We got a lot of new ideas and liked hearing input from other members," says Vasquez. "It helped us understand that there are other ways to solve problems."

As a relatively new director herself, Vasquez sees workshops such as Board Basics as the key for improving the performance of individual directors. She encourages all new directors and anyone who is interested in running for the board to take the course. "You might be going into a community where you don't understand how it operates. It's important to learn the proper procedures and rules of order before you get there."



Board Basics is now available online as CHF Canada's first online learning course. Visit www.chfcanada.coop for details and registration.

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.

Council Profile: Roxane Samms



New CHF Canada Ontario Council member, Roxane Samms.

When **Roxane Samms** first joined **Genesis Housing Co-op** 12 years ago, this London-area co-op was in difficulty, with the service manager threatening to put the co-op in receivership. Despite a busy schedule as a single parent, Roxane joined the board as treasurer to help find a solution. Now the co-op is well managed and governed, with a thriving community and street appeal.

Roxanne says she and others have grown from their experience on the board. "It's the biggest thing I love about being on the board, to see how much people grow just for getting involved—that in itself makes me want to be involved."

"My plate has been pretty full, but after 10 years, I realized I wanted more; I wanted to grow more," says Roxane about her decision to run for the Ontario Council of CHF Canada.

Now that she has been elected, Roxane says her goals for her term on Council include supporting and strengthening governance in the sector, helping to protect co-op autonomy and developing more safeguards for co-ops so they can get the management outcomes they want.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

BE SURE NOT TO MISS THE SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO FALL EDUCATION EVENT

SATURDAY OCTOBER 29, 2011

Four Points by Sheraton in London

The day will consist of a selection of workshops offered to help co-op members and staff successfully fulfill their roles. Come out and learn about holding effective meetings, the members' role in the co-op's finances, 2020 Vision program, the new Housing Services Act and getting governance right.

This is a great opportunity to learn new things not only from the workshops, but also by networking with other co-op members and staff. Registration packages for this event were mailed to your co-op in August and can be found in CHF Canada's online Resource Centre at www.chfcanada.coop.

On October 6, Vote for Co-op Housing

Ontario voters go to the polls for the provincial election on October 6. By now, you should have received a co-op housing election brochure in the mail from CHF Canada's Ontario Region. The campaign theme is "Co-op Housing Makes a Difference", and our election material focuses on three main issues:

- building more co-op housing
- reforming the co-op eviction system
- supporting and protecting existing co-op housing.

We encourage co-op members to talk to candidates at the door. Attend and ask questions at all-candidates meetings. Organize events at your co-op and make sure all members in your co-op vote.



For more information, check out the special election webpage in the Advocacy section of CHF Canada's website (www.chfcanada.coop) or call Harvey Cooper (ext. 237) or

Simone Swail (ext. 238) at 1.800.268.2537, or email hcooper@chfcanada.coop, or sswail@chfcanada.coop

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Story ideas, comments or questions? Denise McGahan at 1-800-644-3949 or email dmcgahan@chfcanada.coop

Editors:
Denise McGahan and Scott Jackson

Contributors:
Sara Hanson
Marty Peterson

Design and production:
Aerographics Creative Services
www.aerographics.ca

Printing:
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Southwestern Ontario
c/o Ontario Region Office
313-720 Spadina Avenue
Toronto ON M5S 2T9
Tel 519.453.0999
Fax 519.453.6854
Toll-free 1.800.644.3949

