

Promoting youth employment CHF Canada 2007 Annual General Meeting

1. Background

At the 2005 annual meeting, members adopted a resolution directing CHF Canada to develop a plan to promote youth employment within the co-op sector and to consider mentoring opportunities as part of the plan.

In 2006 our interim report outlined a framework for our plan and included ideas and activities to encourage youth to consider careers in the co-operative housing sector and the wider co-operative movement.

The framework was comprised of three basic components:

- awareness
- education and training
- work experience.

This report includes an update on our activities over the past year and will serve as a guide for CHF Canada to promote youth involvement within our movement. The overall goal of this plan is to find ways to welcome the involvement of young co-op members, foster youth's interest in the co-op sector and support the development of a career path for youth. This plan is part of CHF Canada's efforts for leadership renewal in our movement.

2. Inviting youth involvement – awareness and promotion

Raising awareness about working in the co-op sector is key to ensuring that young people will discover opportunities open to them within the movement. CHF Canada must use the tools it has at hand to encourage youth involvement. Two practical tools are currently available; *Newsbriefs* and our website.

Newsbriefs

Our publication *Newsbriefs* is sent to our members four times a year. It has become a valuable source of information about the co-op sector. Articles featuring youth events and programming has become a regular part of *Newsbriefs*. This practice will continue and youth material including employment, education and training opportunities will be routinely featured.

CHF Canada website

The “About Housing Co-ops” tab of CHF Canada’s website includes a webpage devoted to youth involvement in co-op governance and management and which includes links to co-op education, training and work experience programs. Information on youth AGM activities including the youth caucus, contacts at CHF Canada and links to external programs and resources such as On Co-op, the Canadian Co-operative Association and the many co-op young leaders programs across the country are included on the webpage.

As part of our plan, this site will be updated to provide links to government support programs that can offer funding to co-ops, federations, staff associations and co-op management companies to create youth employment opportunities.

Targeted messages and funding for youth involvement

Financial issues often present a barrier to youth involvement in sector events and programs. Event marketing materials produced by CHF Canada and our affiliated organizations often offer special financial incentives to encourage youth involvement. This practice will continue wherever possible. Over the past year special youth bursaries and discounts have been offered at the following events:

- Annual General Meeting (CHF Canada)
- Co-operative Management Conference (CHF Canada)
- Introduction to Co-operative Housing Management (CHF Canada)
- CSACO/CASO (staff associations) education event

Young leader camps

Provincial co-operative associations in many parts of Canada hold annual leadership development camps and seminars for young co-operators aged 14 - 18. These programs offer young co-operators with an opportunity to explore co-operatives and develop their leadership skills. CHF Canada continues to support these young leader camps and regularly provides information through our website and *Newsbriefs*.

3. Mentoring, sponsorship and job placement

As youth become aware of opportunities in the co-op sector their involvement must be supported so they can become active in the governance and management of housing co-ops and the co-op movement in general.

Mentoring programs can play an important role in the delivery of opportunities to young people and can lead to long-term involvement in the sector. CHF Canada sponsors youth involvement in sector-based programs which can help reduce economic barriers and create interest in the co-op movement. Job placement programs can also offer youth an

opportunity to develop their interest in a career in the co-op housing sector and the larger co-operative movement.

CHF Canada youth leadership mentoring program

The youth leadership mentoring program is designed to involve co-op youth in the governance of their co-operative. CHF Canada promotes program involvement through *Newsbriefs*, and the youth caucus and workshop program at the annual meeting.

The program assists member co-ops to create a non-voting youth seat on their board and recruit youth for the board position supported by a board mentor for one year. The mentoring program has been implemented in a number of housing co-ops. Successful youth participants have considered elected positions in their co-ops and the program has encouraged their involvement in the wider community.

Internship programs

Internship programs through partnering organizations in the sector serve as another valuable way for youth to explore co-operative careers. These programs include:

- Canadian Co-operative Association Youth Experience International
- Rooftops Canada Young Professional Intern Program

These programs provide overseas placements in co-operative development organizations for post-graduate youth between 19 and 30.

CHF Canada sponsorship

Funding involvement in sector programs and conferences can go a long way to break down economic barriers and provide youth with opportunities for personal and career development within the co-op sector.

In 2007, CHF Canada provided financial support for career-oriented youth to attend international leadership and engagement programs. Sponsorship has been provided for:

- International Building Sustainable Co-operative Futures Conference (Guelph, Ontario)
- Emerging Co-op Leaders Program (NASCO – Washington, DC)
- CHF Canada Annual General Meeting (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Our delegate to the International Building Sustainable Co-op Futures Conference will share her experience with CHF Canada youth and members through presentations and workshops at the 2007 annual meeting.

Job placement opportunities

Housing co-operatives, federations, staff associations and co-op management companies can partner with government and co-op sector organizations to fund employment opportunities for youth.

As part of our plan we will continue to promote existing employment funding programs to our members and encourage the creation of employment opportunities for youth. These programs currently include:

- Co-op Internship Experience Program – a 26 week employment program funded through On Co-op and Service Canada for youth 16 to 29. In 2006, this program created job placements in five housing co-operatives, one federation and one co-op management company.
- Service Canada CSJ program funds up to 100% of the provincial minimum wage for non-profit organizations for a maximum of 18 weeks of summer employment for youth between 15 and 30.
- Provincial Youth employment offices provide employment support partnership programs in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador
- Housing co-operatives can assist youth to meet community volunteer requirements as part of their secondary school graduation requirements. These requirements exist in most provinces across the country.

4. Developing a career path – education and training

Employment in the co-op movement can also be created through a recognized career path. CHF Canada has created a number of initiatives to assist co-op youth acquire skills so that they can seek employment in the co-op sector.

Direct training opportunities

Currently CHF Canada offers special incentives for youth involvement in the following co-op management programs:

- Introduction to Co-op Housing Management
- Co-operative Management Conference
- Staff association training conferences.

Attendance in these programs is supported by a number of youth discounts and bursaries. For example:

- Four youth bursaries were offered at the Introduction to Co-op Housing Management in March 2007, three were used
- Half price registration for youth alternates to the annual meeting and a low fee for additional youth registrations
- Half price bursaries offered to youth attending co-op staff association training conferences
- Free registration for participants under 30 at 2007 CHF Canada fall education events (after first co-op registration)

Career path development

Many young people look for a defined career path when looking at post secondary education or employment. Our plan includes linking youth with post secondary education opportunities and the new co-op management certification initiative under development by CHF Canada.

Core training in property management is available through community colleges or property management programs offered by programs across the country including

- Institute of Housing Management (Humber College, Toronto, Ontario)
- Property Management Training Association (Toronto, Ontario)
- Real Estate Institute of Canada
- Sauder School of Management – property management program (University of British Columbia, Vancouver)

Scholarship programs

Some academic awards (bursaries and scholarships) are available within the co-op movement. Both the Peel Halton Co-operative Housing Federation and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto offer post-secondary scholarships for youth. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation offers post-secondary scholarships to children of residents in assisted housing in the province. And the Canadian Co-operative Association offers a number of post-graduate degree awards.

CHF Canada Co-op Management Certification Initiative

CHF Canada's co-op management certification initiative will add co-op specific training to property management training programs so that co-op staff will have the necessary skills and expertise to manage housing co-operatives.

A certificate recognizing specialized training in housing co-operative management will improve youth recruitment by raising the profile of co-op staff and recognizing them as skilled professionals. The certificate will provide a clear career path for co-op youth interested in co-op management.

5. Conclusion

The demand for introductory management training, the younger profile of the delegates and the use of bursaries offered for various education programs indicates that the co-operative housing movement is having some success attracting new and younger managers to the sector.

Participation in the Youth Mentoring Program, placement in the Co-op Internship Experience Program and youth participation in international co-operative conferences show that co-op youth are exploring opportunities for a future in the sector.

These indicators suggest that a consistent effort through our plan to promote youth employment will have positive results. However success will not be realized without support from within our membership. CHF Canada needs to build that support to ensure youth become actively involved in the governance and management of the co-operative housing movement now. Our future depends on it.