

# SCOOP

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES IN BC

**Inside:**

**CHF Canada board visits BC  
Waterside Housing Co-op  
Avoiding unit vacancies  
and much more...**



FALL 2007 \$3

Before Gino left, CHF BC gave him a few parting gifts to help him cope with Alberta weather.

## Gino says farewell

*We're sad to report that CHF BC vice president Gino Gamboa resigned from the board in September after accepting a job offer in Calgary. Members who have met him at federation functions, during visits to co-ops, or campaigning for co-op causes know him to be a big man with a very big heart. Gino is a person of few words. His carefully measured statements carry a lot of weight, at the board table and elsewhere. That's why, in a final goodbye interview, SCOOP was taking notes:*

### What was your first connection with co-ops?

I grew up in a housing co-op in Peru set up by the workers of the Peruvian Harbour Authority, where my father worked. It had around 300 homes, which members could eventually purchase, and ran its own sports facility and private park.

After moving to Canada I was living in non-profit housing when I saw a small ad in the local paper announcing that a new housing co-op called Terra Nova was forming in Richmond. I've been on the board there for seven years, as president, vice president, and member-at-large.

### Why did you get involved with CHF BC?

It was to help leaky co-ops. I still can't believe that a country like Canada, a First World country, has people living in conditions that some of our members have had to endure.

That has been the biggest challenge, definitely, the fight for a solution. It has also been the biggest accomplishment, although there's still lots of work to do.

At least we know we have a process to bring these homes back to the way they're supposed to be, for the current members and for members to come. That's a big thing.

### How will you look back on your work with CHF BC?

It's been great. It was a pretty steep learning curve during the first year or so. But the people make you feel comfortable to participate and contribute your ideas and opinions. It's been great to work with people like Wes (Hosler), Mike (Alsop) and Suzann (Zimmering) with their experience in the sector. It's like having a book to help you learn anything you need to know.

The other thing that I'm really attached to is the work we did on the diversity committee to create the Aaron Webster Memorial Fund. I think this is going to be really good for the youth and the membership.

**Until the end of September, Gino Gamboa was a member of Terra Nova Housing Co-op in Richmond. He served two two-year terms on the board of CHF BC.**

**CHF BC is seeking candidates for board and finance committee elections at the November 24 Annual General Meeting. For details, visit the member section of [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca), click on 'resources' then 'member meetings'.**



### In your role as chair of CHF Canada's federations committee, how do you see BC's role in the national movement?

We have a very strong movement in BC, with a supportive membership base and the best federation staff in the country. In a lot of important ways we are number one. For example, a lot of the leadership and ideas for the 2020 Vision project are coming from and will continue to come from BC.

### What would you like to say to CHF BC members as you head to Calgary?

I know this move is the right thing to do for my family, but this has been the toughest decision I've had to make since we moved to Canada. It's really hard to say goodbye to all my friends in the sector. I'm very grateful to all the people who welcomed me, guided me, and made it easy to volunteer.

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### Co-op notices are published separately.

Co-op notices are available at [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca) (in the 'Co-op Directory'), by calling 604.879.5111 (toll-free 1.866.879.5111) or by email to [info@chf.bc.ca](mailto:info@chf.bc.ca). You can get a free copy by contacting our offices at 200-5550 Fraser Street in Vancouver or 410-1105 Pandora Avenue in Victoria.

**ON THE COVER:** Members of CHF Canada's Board of Directors and Ontario Council visit the rooftop deck of Lore Krill Housing Co-op in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. See the story on p.21.



**hot dates** Mark your calendars for upcoming co-op housing events you don't want to miss.  
Mainland **5** Island **10**



# CRS

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Has your co-op completed major building envelope repairs?

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Protect your investment.

COHO Repair Services continues to grow with the co-op sector as needs change. Our services now include:

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[www.repair.coho.bc.ca](http://www.repair.coho.bc.ca)



**SCOOP** is published quarterly by CHF BC to provide a link between housing co-ops and the Federation, and a forum for opinion. *SCOOP's* content does not necessarily represent CHF BC policy. Publication of an advertisement does not imply endorsement of the product or service. *SCOOP* is distributed free to all households in CHF BC member co-ops. **ISSN 1206-2766**

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# up front

## LETTERS

Dear SCOOP,

According to the Asthma Society of Canada, Canada has one of the highest incidences of asthma in the world. Of the 3 million Canadians living with asthma, 60% do not have their asthma under control. For many asthmatics, the feces of the house dust mite, commonly found in carpets, are a powerful trigger. The Asthma Society of Canada, Asthma UK, and the American Lung Association are unanimous in recommending the removal of carpets (particularly in bedrooms) as a basic step towards the management and care of asthma.

Given these figures and the unanimous medical voice, it is extremely disappointing to read the piece printed in the Fall 2007 issue of SCOOP regarding carpets and air quality ("Carpet can help improve air quality," Commercial Services News, p.2). This information, while ostensibly shared in order

to provide useful information to co-op members and boards making flooring decisions, could have a detrimental effect on the health of asthma-suffering co-op members. While the Carpet and Rug Institute may be correct in claiming that carpets have low VOC emissions, the fact that carpets function as fertile homes and breeding grounds for dust mites is a significant part of the problem for many asthma/allergy sufferers. Unfortunately, the Institute neglected to mention this part of the equation while trumpeting the supposed health benefits of carpet.

Sincerely,  
Sonja Boon,  
Kaslo Gardens Housing Co-op

*We welcome different points of view on our many programs and services. Our flooring program offers some attractive alternatives to carpet, including laminate and vinyl flooring.*

*For more information, visit [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca), click on 'member services', then 'commercial services', then 'flooring'.*



## hot dates

Come and get all fired up about co-op housing at these mainland events:

- Nov**
- 7** Workshop: Membership terminations (see page 10)
  - 13** Delegates Forum
  - 24** Annual General Meeting and Anniversary Dinner/Dance (see ad on page 9)

## chip rates

Preferred rates for CHF BC member co-op operating accounts. These rates were effective October 1, 2007 and are subject to change.

<b>CCEC</b> – variable	3.63%
<b>CCEC</b> – fixed 12-month	3.65%
<b>Coast Capital</b> (Vancouver Island)	4.00%
<b>Prospera</b>	3.15%
<b>Vancity</b>	4.193%



## WANTED

### SCOOP - YOUR CO-OP MAGAZINE - WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

All letters, stories, pictures and questions qualify you for our prize draw. All entries qualify for our prize draw. This issue's winning contributor is Sonja Boon from Kaslo Gardens Co-op in Vancouver.

Send photos, art, stories, video, etc to CHF BC, attention: *SCOOP*, 200 – 5550 Fraser Street, Vancouver, BC V5W 2Z4. Submissions may be reproduced in CHF BC print materials and on CHF BC's website.

## Summer celebrations

Summer is always a popular time of year for co-op barbecues, parties and anniversary celebrations, and CHF BC was invited to several co-op events. Congratulations to the co-ops pictured here as well as to Pine Ridge in Burnaby, Kinross Creek, Alexander Laidlaw, and Cedar Mill co-ops in Vancouver, all celebrating 25 years, and to Meadow Walk in Richmond on their 20th anniversary. Aaron Webster Housing Co-op celebrated its name change.

If your co-op is celebrating an anniversary or any other big milestone, please let us know. CHF BC directors and staff love attending these events to get to know members better. And we love to post the news in SCOOP and on CHF BC's website. You can email invitations, news and photos to [sjackson@chf.bc.ca](mailto:sjackson@chf.bc.ca).

**Top right:** This summer Marine Court Housing Co-op members celebrated their new bicycle storage area built to help cut down on car use.

**Middle right):** Burrardview members celebrated the '60s at their annual summer barbecue.

**Bottom right:** Members of Kinross Creek celebrate 25 years with representatives from CHF BC, Cana Management, and the Agency for Co-operative Housing.





## Aaron Webster honoured by co-op and CHF BC

In August, the members of Aaron Webster Housing Co-operative in Vancouver held a celebration to honour their former president, Aaron Webster, who was murdered in Stanley Park on November 17, 2001. The co-operative officially changed its name from City View to Aaron Webster Housing Co-op

Many members paid tribute to Aaron's memory at the event. CHF BC president Wes Hosler and vice president Gino Gamboa attended on behalf of the Federation. They presented the co-op with a memorial plaque marking the occasion and spoke about the memorial fund CHF BC has established in Aaron's name.

The Aaron Webster Memorial Fund will help young people living in housing co-ops to develop projects that highlight the issue of diversity and promote understanding within their co-operative and community.

Co-op youth, aged 13 - 20, are encouraged to apply for grants from the Aaron Webster Memorial Fund. Applications are available from CHF BC.

Donations to the fund can be made care of CHF BC. Donors requiring a tax receipt should contact CHF BC before sending their donation.

**CHF BC's Diversity Committee welcomes your feedback regarding this article or any area of co-op diversity. Send your comments or suggestions to Diversity Committee, 200 - 5550 Fraser St. Vancouver V5W 2Z4 or to [info@chf.bc.ca](mailto:info@chf.bc.ca).**



Members of Aaron Webster Housing Co-op celebrated their new name this summer.

CHF BC president, Wes Hosler (right), and vice president, Gino Gamboa, admire the new sign.







Nat Bailey Stadium will soon have a baseball museum named after Garry Point Housing Co-op member Bud Kerr.

## Vancouver Canadians names museum after housing co-op member

Nat Bailey Stadium will soon have a baseball museum and it is being named after Bud Kerr of Garry Point Housing Co-op in Steveston. Kerr, 72, who is also known by his nickname of Mr. Baseball, is donating his extensive collection of baseball memorabilia to the park. "Now I know how ball players feel when they're inducted into the Hall of Fame," says Kerr. Congratulations Bud!

## CHF BC welcomes five member co-ops

Four returning members and one new member were approved by CHF BC's board of directors since July. A warm welcome back to Rising Star and Chilean housing co-ops in Vancouver, Ida Vista in Salmon Arm, and Guildtown in Surrey. And we extend welcome and congratulations to a brand new BC co-op: Roofs and Roots in Victoria. CHF BC now serves a record 231 member co-ops, representing 11,962 units.

## Co-op engagement campaign set for Vancouver

Over the next year, the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) will pilot a public engagement campaign in Metro Vancouver to link co-operatives with responsible consumerism. It will help co-ops educate their members on consumer purchasing decisions related to the environment, fair trade and support for co-ops and other social enterprises.

CCA will work with CHF BC, CCEC, Coast Capital Savings, Envision, Vancity, Mountain Equipment Co-op and the BC Co-operative Association. The aim is to position co-ops as leaders and advocates on issues beyond their core products and services.

## CHF BC's own 25th anniversary celebration continues

Our own anniversary celebrations have been going strong all year, and they're by no means over. The big anniversary finale will be on November 24 with a gala dinner and dance at Federico's Supper Club in Vancouver. You don't want to miss this event. Your \$25 ticket includes prizes, a gourmet three-course meal, dancing, and fabulous live entertainment by Federico himself. There are still tickets available but they are sure to disappear quickly as people realize what a great deal this is. So don't delay, get yours now by contacting the CHF BC office at 604.879.5111, toll-free 1.866.879.5111 or [info@chf.bc.ca](mailto:info@chf.bc.ca). We look forward to seeing you at our final anniversary extravaganza.





**25th Anniversary**

*Dinner & Dance*

**November 24, 2007**

**Federico's Supper Club**

**Tickets \$25**

(Limit two per order)

To order tickets, contact Cathleen at 604.879.5111, ext. 0  
(toll free 1.866.879.5111) or [cdavies@chf.bc.ca](mailto:cdavies@chf.bc.ca).

# Education events

*Promoting sound management, good governance and principled leadership*

**Sound management goes hand in hand with good governance and principled leadership. Whether you need help with policies, your long-term vision, overall direction or taking care of daily business, there's something in our education program for you.**

## **Membership terminations workshop**

**Wednesday, November 7**

**Geoffrey Dabbs and  
Thom Armstrong**

**7:00 to 10:00 pm at**

**CHF BC Vancouver office**

Forcing a member to leave the co-op is unpleasant enough. Don't make it worse for everyone by ignoring the proper legal steps. We will outline what the Co-op Act and your Rules have to say about membership terminations. We'll also explain the difference between termination of membership and termination of the occupancy agreement.

The December 2006 Court of Appeal ruling has clarified these issues for every co-op (see Winter 2007 SCOOP, page 17). Come to this workshop if you want to know:

- the legal steps involved in terminating membership and occupancy
- how to avoid the most common (and expensive) mistakes
- how to decide which termination procedure to use
- what you can do to balance community and individual rights.

Fees for the terminations workshop are \$60 for members and \$180 for non-members plus GST. CHF BC will invoice your co-op after you register. Register at [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca), 604.879.5111 (toll-free 1.866.879.5111) ext. 0 or [info@CHF.bc.ca](mailto:info@CHF.bc.ca).

## **Membership terminations workshop**

**Monday, January 21, 2008**

**Bob Milne and Thom Armstrong  
7:00 to 10:00 pm**

**Victoria venue to be announced**

See November 7th terminations workshop description and fees. To register, contact Kerry Panter at 384.9444 or [kpanter@CHF.bc.ca](mailto:kpanter@CHF.bc.ca) or visit [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca) and follow links to the Vancouver Island page.

**Before signing up for a terminations workshop, check to see if your co-op has adopted new Rules since 2001. If not, CHF BC's Model Rules and Occupancy Agreement can make the job much easier. Call us for help—it's easier than you might think.**

**Mark your calendar for the Spring Education Conference on March 29, 2008.**

## **Portable workshops**

**Ask us about our portable workshops. We can tailor a workshop to meet your needs and bring it right to your co-op. Up to 20 members can attend. What could be more convenient?**



## Free energy assessments for co-ops in Vancouver and Victoria

City Green Solutions has just launched Affordable Warmth BC, a project sponsored by Environment Canada to offer no-cost energy assessments to a limited number of affordable housing developments, including housing co-ops, in the GVRD and Capital Regional District.

Last year, City Green worked with several housing co-ops, offering similar services as part of an initial pilot project. You can read one example of their success, with Ford Road Housing Co-op in Pitt Meadows, in the Summer 2007 issue of SCOOP.

To qualify for the Affordable Warmth BC program, co-ops must be members of CHF BC. For more information or to register, contact City Green at 1.866.381.9995 or visit [www.citygreen.ca](http://www.citygreen.ca).

## Reduce Energy Use and Save Money *by John Waldo*

Here is a list of simple things you can do in your home that will reduce your energy bills and have a positive impact on our environment.

### Heating and Cooling consumes the largest percentage of total energy use in the average home.

- Set your thermostat at 18-22 degrees during the day and 15-18 degrees at night or when you are away from home. Consider installing a programmable thermostat.
- For cooling, set the thermostat no lower than 25 degrees.
- Look for energy leaks and seal with caulk or weather stripping.
- Insulate your basement, attic and crawl spaces. Install storm windows and doors.
- Check heating and cooling equipment at least once a year. Replace furnace filters and clean ducts regularly.
- Close doors to unoccupied rooms and close vents in those rooms when heat or central air conditioning is on.

### Water Heating is second only to space heating for energy consumption.

- Repair leaking faucets. Dollars may literally be going down the drain.
- Turn the water heater down to 50 degrees.
- Blanket all water heaters with an approved insulation jacket. Insulate hot water pipes.

### Refrigeration uses almost 25% of all electricity in the average home.

- Check door gasket for tight seal. Leaking cold air costs money.
- Limit the number of times the doors are opened.
- Let hot items cool before placing them in the refrigerator.
- Remove dust from coils and cooling elements.
- Defrost freezer regularly.

### Lighting accounts for up to 10% of total energy use in the average home.

- If you're not using the lights, turn them off!
- Use daylight whenever possible.
- For an instant room brightener, use light colors to decorate. Natural light will be reflected and will enable you to use lower wattage light bulbs.
- Clean your light bulbs to get more light per bulb.
- Change your light bulbs to fluorescent bulbs.
- Install dimmer switches so that incandescent lights can be used at a lower level.

### Cooking

- Use a toaster-oven, crock-pot, or small microwave when cooking small to moderately sized meals.
- Use the smallest pan possible. Smaller pans require less energy.
- Keep burner pans clean to reflect heat and use energy more efficiently.
- Cover pots to avoid heat loss.

If we all implemented these changes the "green" impact would be considerable.

**John Waldo is the Director of Client Services for COHO Repair Services.**



Waterside spent the summer behind scaffolding.



## Waterside Co-op looks forward to removing the tarps

*Nestled on the Gorge Waterway, Waterside Co-op enjoys one of the best locations in Victoria. Members in the units with water views enjoy watching dragon boat trials and kayaks from their windows.*

**W**aterside Co-op was built in 1984. This twenty-seven unit co-op has two accessible units as well as one, two and three bedroom units. The co-op is conveniently situated near buses, shopping, downtown Victoria, parks and schools.

Despite the challenges of being a leaky co-op, members are proud of their community.

“We house families, single parents as well as married couples, children of all ages, seniors and disabled persons; some needing some subsidy and others who pay full housing charge,” says co-op member Fiona Apeldorn. “We have several ethnicities and enjoy

having members from all over the world including Ecuador, South Africa, Trinidad and other parts of Canada.”

Stacey Johnson is a member of Waterside Co-op and is the liaison for the co-op remediation. She describes the process as both challenging and rewarding for the community. Stacey says during trying times she tries to stay focused on the outcome of a ‘fixed’ co-op and encourages other members to do the same.

“It’s a long process,” says Stacey. “It’s dark under the tarp; you can’t use your barbeque or patio. Children can’t play in common areas. It’s noisy and messy. Work starts early and you can come out

in the morning to find your car covered in sawdust depending on how the wind blows. When windows and doors need to come off, security issues arise. Members get discouraged and occasionally cranky.”

But there are good things too. Stacey has only praise for Cam and his team at Westrock Construction, who have become part of the community during the remediation process.

“They’re always cheerful and co-operative. They helped our seniors carry in groceries and members awoke one snowy morning to find the co-op already plowed and salted. In return, members baked treats for the construction team and held a barbeque for them.”

Waterside members say it best.

#### **Rob Olson:**

My wife, Heather and I have lived here at Waterside Co-op for seven years and have enjoyed our time here. The friendships that develop with our neighbors is priceless. We are ten minutes away from anything; we cannot ask for anything better.



Some Waterside members (l to r): Lea Goward, Judy Campbell, Fiona Apeldorn and Patti Faulconbridge.

## Leaky co-ops at a glance

Category	Co-ops	Units
Fixed	13	712
Under construction	7	318
Design/tender	6	403
Loan approved	9	335
Analysis	11	710
Redevelopment	2	99
Other	21	1265
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3826</b>

#### **Patti and Mason Faulconbridge:**

I came to Waterside and co-op living in 2000 after giving up a leaky condo saddling me with unmanageable debt. The condo that I had lived in was like a building of strangers to me and my family. Waterside is a perfect size. My child and I know everyone well enough to feel comfortable and yet have our own private time when needed. The ongoing building remediation will result in a year of turmoil and inconvenience, but we will be living in a safe

building for many years to come. Who knows – we may just miss that lovely green scaffnet and smiling workers at our windows!

#### **Fiona Apeldorn:**

You know you live among friends when you can knock on your neighbor’s door looking to borrow a cup of flour or a rolling pin and when you know your kids are safe in a neighbor’s house with their kids. It takes a community to raise a child and in this co-op this is very true. I also enjoy getting together as neighbours for barbecues and birthdays and sometimes dancing. The construction is a short-term nuisance but will be a long-term benefit for those who live here now and in the future.

## Island Education Day

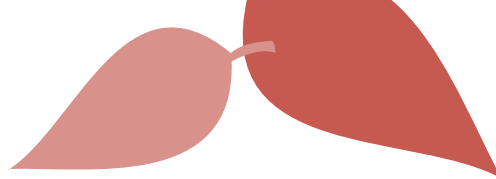
### Handling member complaints effectively

*Saturday, November 3 at the Glentana Rec Centre  
April English*

For the first time, Vancouver Island's Fall Education Day will offer a full-day workshop rather than two half-day ones.

Member complaints are a fact of life in housing co-ops. Unless there's a good process in place, boards, committees and staff can spend a lot of time dealing with complaints without actually resolving the problem. This can lead to more conflict and unhappy members.

This workshop will show you how to take the guesswork out of dealing with complaints.



We'll talk about why and how different types of member complaints arise; how you can respond effectively; complying with privacy requirements under the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA); how to decrease the number of complaints; and changes you can make in your co-op to help members live more co-operatively.

After rave reviews at the last mainland conference, we've expanded this workshop to a full day with more time to work on practical strategies. And you'll take away sample forms, letters and other useful tools.

To register, visit [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca) or contact Kerry at 384.9444 or [kpanter@CHF.bc.ca](mailto:kpanter@CHF.bc.ca).

## island dates

Come and get all fired up about co-op housing at these mainland events:

- |            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Nov</b> | <b>3</b>  | Island Education Day                          |
| <b>Jan</b> | <b>21</b> | Workshop: Membership terminations (see p. 11) |

## island chip rates

Preferred rates for CHF BC member co-op accounts. Rates effective October 1, 2007 and subject to change.

<b>Coast Capital</b> (Vancouver Island)	4.0 %
<b>Vancity</b>	4.193 %

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**For info about Island services, contact Kerry Panter in CHF BC's Victoria office at 384.9444.**





## BFI contract renewed

*CHF BC members are the real winners*

After a comprehensive request for proposals and extensive research and due diligence, we are pleased to announce that CHF BC has awarded the waste collection and recycling services contract to BFI Canada Inc. for another three-year term.

Our partnership with BFI has delivered exceptional value to CHF BC members since 1998, saving co-ops thousands of dollars each year compared to the retail rates and extras charged by other suppliers.

Our new agreement promises to continue these group-buying benefits. Price increases are minimal despite rising operating costs and fuel prices that have affected the industry. There will

be no extra fees or fuel surcharges – reported to add more than 25% to some contracted rates – for the life of the contract without our consent. And CHF BC members using our program with BFI will not be levied the “strike surcharge” charged by many Lower Mainland suppliers to compensate for extra expenses incurred due to restricted access to landfills.

BFI Canada currently provides garbage and recycling services at very competitive prices to over 100 CHF BC member co-ops on the mainland and Vancouver Island. They consistently deliver high quality service, and we are happy to have them continue as one of our Commercial Services partners.



Commercial services director Julie Hunter drives a hard bargain collecting great services and savings for CHF BC member co-ops.

For more information about how your co-op can take advantage of this program, please contact Julie Hunter, Commercial Services Director at 604.879.5111 (ext. 138) or [jhunter@chf.bc.ca](mailto:jhunter@chf.bc.ca).

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**EAST END FOOD CO-OP**

# Keeping the co-op full

by Nicholas Gazzard

*CHF Canada's Core Management Standards outline a series of benchmarks for the quality of management co-ops need to run well. They focus on outcomes - they do not tell you what kind of management you should have – only what results you should expect. This is an edited version of an article on avoiding vacancies in your co-op from the December 2005 issue of Newsbriefs.*

## Waiting Lists

If you keep a waiting list make sure you keep it up to date. Many co-ops have turned to their lists to fill units, only to find that most of those on it have found other housing or have vanished.

Some co-ops hold successful open houses for those who might be interested in co-op housing. It's a chance to share information and get new names for your waiting list.

If you don't have a generous waiting list to turn to, your best option is an advertising strategy. Try advertising for applicants using CHF BC's free website and printed listings.

## Why are vacancies so serious for your co-op?

Once you've lost housing charge revenue because of empty units, you can never get that revenue back. To earn the income you need to run your co-op properly – and to have a healthy, positive co-op community – you need to keep vacancies down to an absolute minimum. No vacancies at all is the goal you are aiming for.

## The results we want

### **The co-op keeps turnover down by giving good service to its members**

You won't have vacancies if households aren't moving out. Nothing keeps unit turnover down like satisfied members. Do you want members to be active in the co-op? In return make sure they are treated well. Keep the co-op looking good. Follow up on repairs promptly. Have good policies that treat everyone fairly. Make sure your meetings are well organized, stimulating affairs that keep members coming back. And don't forget to give your members a chance to get together socially now and then – it helps build community.

### **The co-op restores units to market-ready condition on move-out**

If you want to fill units quickly, get them ready for market right away. A market-ready unit has a good coat of paint, clean carpets, and fixtures that are in good condition. You won't save money by skimping on unit preparation – or by relying on members to do the work after they move in. Applicants are more likely to say yes when they see an attractive unit and will care more about their unit if it's in good shape to begin with.

### **The co-op advertises vacancies**

If you have a vacancy coming up and no applicant to fill it with, you'll need to advertise. Vacancies won't fill themselves. The co-op that gets its message out is a lot less likely to have empty units.

### **The co-op has a quick and simple application process**

You should be able to approve new members as quickly as the private landlord down the street can approve new tenants. And you don't need to sacrifice your co-op spirit in the process.

# Don't promise a unit to an applicant then "withdraw" the offer

It's important for co-ops to follow good policy and procedure when processing and accepting applicants as new members.

A new co-op member must be approved by the board (or a committee made up of one or more directors that have been delegated this authority by the board in writing). In either case, board minutes must reflect the co-op decision to approve a new member. Boards may delegate any other part of the co-op member selection process to staff or committee.

The policy used to select a member should be easy to follow, fair and consistent. And the procedure used for processing applicants and notifying a successful applicant should be clear and always adhered to.

Most importantly, make sure that:

- the co-op board has accepted the applicant before advising the successful applicant.
- the member notifying the successful applicant of the co-op's decision has the authority to speak on behalf of the co-op. An applicant has no idea who may speak for the co-op and the co-op may be bound by commitments made.
- the co-op does not accept share or any other payment until after the board has approved and documented the approval of the new member.

Once a co-op commits, either orally or in writing, to give membership to an applicant in exchange for the applicant's promise to pay or their actual payment, then the co-op is legally bound to give that person membership. There are no circumstances that allow a co-op to withdraw that agreement unless of course the applicant agrees.

Applying for membership in a housing co-op shouldn't be an ordeal. The process can be quick and simple. First, make sure there's someone on the other end of the phone number you put in your advertising. Offer to show the unit right away. And there's no need to delay things while you set up a formal interview session.

You don't need big interviews. Instead, when you meet the applicant to show the unit, talk about your co-op and explain the responsibilities – and benefits – of membership. If your applicant is still interested, then you've got a new member – as long as the credit and landlord checks don't turn up any problems. And background checks

should be completed right away, because a slow turnaround risks losing your applicant. Then you'll have to start all over again.

## **Units are filled right away**

If you've gone about finding new members effectively you'll get the result you really want – units that are filled right away.

## **The co-op orients new members promptly**

Give new members information about living in the co-op right after they've moved in. If you want productive members who take an active role in the co-op, then show the new members how to do that. Give them some

options to choose from, but remember – the most important thing to ask of new members is to come to members' meetings to learn about and vote on the issues. That's the best way to get them involved in the co-op. And while you're sharing information, tell your new members a bit about what's where in the surrounding community. It's all part of the service!

## **Getting the results you want**

To get the results you want, you'll need the right people and the right tools.

Your most important resource in filling units is the person prospective members deal with over the phone and in person when they come to see the unit. You need a friendly representative who is available at convenient times. Someone who can show the unit well and explain clearly what living in a co-op offers. That person can be a member, but more and more co-ops are realizing that their manager might be the best person – or, in a busy co-op, someone whose job focuses on the members and marketing.

Notice I've said nothing about the membership committee? That's because, in a competitive market, using a well-meaning but slow-to-act membership committee to fill units may not be the best way to get the job done. You don't need a whole committee to fill one vacancy – your applicants are applying for housing, not a job. Remember, they'll be paying you, not the other way round.

**Nicholas Gazzard is the executive director of CHF Canada.**



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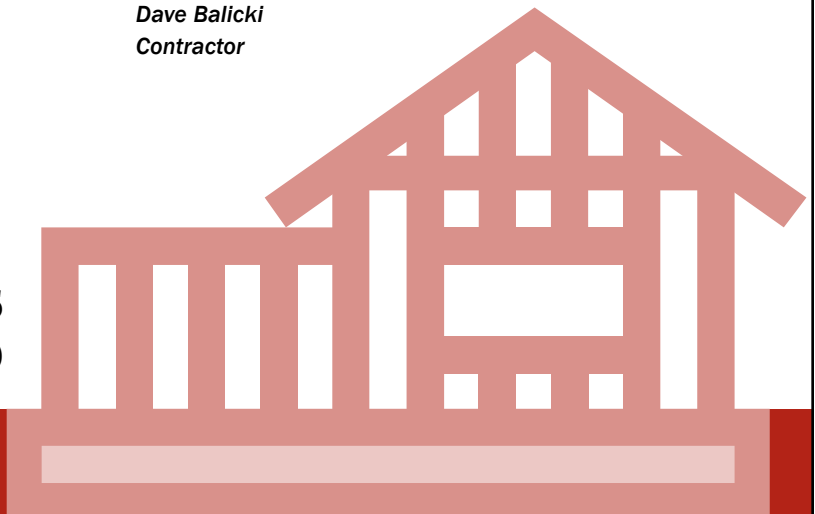
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# Summer travels reveal co-ops everywhere

**A**las, summer break has reached an end as members return to school and work. My summer consisted of a bit of traveling to Tofino and Toronto.

Tofino was absolutely gorgeous, and venturing into the quaint town was rather enjoyable. In addition to the relaxed pace and calming ocean view, Tofino and Ucluelet's prominent co-ops made the island atmosphere all the more pleasant. My family and I were sure to pick up stuff at the co-op grocery stores (there was no need for us to go to the old co-op hardware store, but it was reassuring to know it was there) and topped off our gas tank at the co-op gas station for the long drive back to the Nanaimo ferry terminal.

Toronto was a different kind of cool, big and loud and constantly bustling. It was easy to feel small. Nonetheless, I was lucky enough to find a few less crowded hangouts around Kensington Avenue and Queen Street West, both areas bursting with progressive creativity that made me think of places like The Drive and Granville Island at home.

The Toronto spot that really stood out for me, however, was Danforth Avenue. The Carrot Common is one hip space made up of various types of co-ops, among them The Big Carrot Natural Food Store, a worker co-op specializing in organic foodstuffs. More than 50% of their profits earned go to community-oriented organizations such as Carrot Cache (a fund supporting other worker co-ops as well as organic farmers), social justice and advocacy group projects, and the Co-operative Resource Pool of Ontario. Knowing all this made the bread and hummus I purchased there all the more delectable. And it turns out the Big Carrot was founded in 1984, just a few years before I was born, by four co-operative women!

One of the most exciting yet brief memories of Toronto would have to be meeting NDP leader Jack Layton at Taste of the Dan, a festival that takes place on Danforth every year. I was able to put my nervousness aside, introducing myself while adding that I truly appreciated the work our own Libby Davies does on behalf of the co-op housing

movement. There wasn't enough time to put much pressure on him to do more, but at least there was enough time to snap a quick photo!

In conclusion, though I was just a bit too punctual for CHF Canada's 2008 AGM in Toronto, I'm glad I was still able to observe some ever-present components of a strong co-operative movement. ■



Aly and her sister Arielle, both Yes Camp grads, put in a good word for co-op housing when they met NDP leader Jack Layton during their summer adventures.

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CHF Canada directors and staff visited Lore Krill's rooftop deck during a tour of Vancouver co-ops.



## CHF Canada board visits Vancouver

**C**HF Canada's board of directors and Ontario council met in BC for their annual planning sessions in September. The visit gave the board a chance to see some BC co-ops and learn more about our members in BC. They were particularly interested in learning more about work being done to fix leaky co-ops, to which CHF Canada has made significant contributions.

"Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to learn more about the issues facing BC housing co-ops," president Ken Elliott wrote in a letter to CHF BC following the meeting. "The days we spent in Vancouver have made our strong partnership even stronger."

In addition to their own meetings, CHF Canada directors met jointly with the board of CHF BC and took a bus tour to see local housing co-ops.

CHF BC president Wes Hosler took them on a tour of his own award-winning co-op, Lore Krill in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and proudly showed off his own unit.

"We welcome CHF Canada to BC and appreciate this opportunity to get to know each other better," said Wes Hosler at the end of the week-long visit. "The relationship between the two federations has improved steadily over recent years and I would say it is now close to perfect."

The major part of the meeting was devoted to planning CHF Canada activities and priorities for the coming year. The issues the board discussed included:

- a multi-stakeholder campaign to reduce housing need in Canada, and gain support from government for more affordable housing in existing and new housing co-ops
- the upload of program administration for Ontario's provincial-program co-ops to the Agency for Co-operative Housing, and reform of Ontario legislation affecting housing co-ops
- new resources to help co-ops with good management and governance
- the delivery of all 2020 Vision tools planned for Phase 1 of the project
- interactive online education resources for co-ops and their managers
- a review of CHF Canada's governance including a consultative process among the leaders of the co-op housing movement
- working with the Ontario government and our members to complete eviction law reform in the province.

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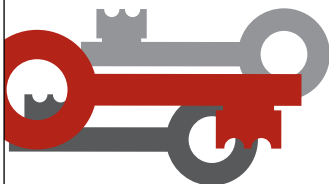
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# the co-op connection

Ian MacPherson is stepping down as head of BC Institute for Co-operative Studies (BCICS) at the University of Victoria.

## Retiring head of co-op institute says there's more work to do

Ian MacPherson will soon step down as head of the BC Institute for Co-operative Studies (BCICS), a co-operative research organization he established at the University of Victoria (UVIC). He feels there is more to be done to raise the profile of co-ops and the Institute itself.

MacPherson, a professor of history at UVIC, has focused his academic research on the history of the co-operative movement. His published work includes *Co-operation, Conflict and Consensus: BC Central and the credit union movement to 1994*.

"One of the key problems in the co-op world," says MacPherson, "is the shortage of good information to be accessed easily. One of my dreams for BCICS was to create a flexible and open system, like Wikipedia, where we could accumulate resources. Co-op housing has done a great job creating information, but for consumer co-ops, credit unions, and worker co-ops, the

information is often highly repetitive and rather shallow."

MacPherson himself has played a significant part in the movement he studies. He was the founding president of the Canadian Co-operative Association and has served on the boards of BC Central Credit Union, the Canadian Co-operative Credit Society, the Co-operative College of Canada and the Co-operative Union of Canada.

In 2000, MacPherson was inspired to create an institute dedicated to co-operative studies and co-operative values. He was the Dean of Humanities at UVIC at the time and a conversation with a student sparked the idea. His position at the university put him in the right place to make it happen. His experience made him the right person.

BCICS has expanded research on co-ops, with ten books coming out this year. Their course offerings at UVIC have been limited due to



university regulations. They offer only occasional online courses, but close to 80 students have completed research contracts with the Institute.

"One of the most enjoyable parts of this has been having those young people involved," says MacPherson.

With retirement, MacPherson looks forward to the free time that will allow him to write, but he'd also like to help BCICS deepen the information on co-operatives and make sure the information is widely available.

"I hope that people in the co-op movement will recognize the variety and strength of the movement...and that we can all be good allies." ■



For information about BCICS, visit [web.uvic.ca/bcics](http://web.uvic.ca/bcics).

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