

# SCOOP

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES IN BC

**Inside:**

**River Woods Co-op**

**Section 95 success**

**Federal funds for housing**



# Candidates keen on housing; so what's stopping us?

“Boring” seemed to be the word most often used by pundits to describe the 2005 provincial election. Even among candidates the most upbeat description seemed to be “low key”.

Health care, education, and cuts to social programs formed the NDP's stock in trade, while a strong economy, low taxes and scandals of governments past were the Liberals' mantra. For Greens, a new politics and sustainable economics was a constant refrain.

Housing, despite a short-lived bubble of attention around rising homelessness, scarcely was mentioned. Even the NDP and the Greens, who had housing policies in their platforms, didn't put them front and centre.

At first, this seems surprising. As readers of my election blog will already know, most candidates (admittedly, all from

urban ridings) knew about the problems. All were concerned about rising homelessness, and many knew that 250,000 people in BC lack affordable housing. Even those who didn't know the exact numbers were unsurprised by the magnitude and thought it a disaster. These sentiments were shared by candidates of all parties. Why not, then, propose a solution and make it a campaign issue?

Jenny Kwan and Gabriel Yiu came closest to what seems to me the real explanation. “Where,” asked Gabriel, “are the cities, the federal government?” Jenny noted that an NDP government would contribute to the solution, but couldn't do it alone. This seems right. Why go out on a limb promising a solution you can't deliver without help from others who might not help? All you'll get is blame when you spend a lot of money and the problem doesn't disappear: a guaranteed political loser.


So what's a poor housing advocate to do? We need to focus on all levels of government and persuade them to accept a share of responsibility. Cities can provide cheap land and affordable-housing-friendly zoning. The province can assume a share of capital and operating budgets and the federal government can – and may, given the new budget – stop washing its hands of responsibility.

The provincial election may be over, but CHF BC will keep working on all these levels. And if we find a solution, that will be anything but boring! ■

**Darren Kitchen** was CHF BC's election campaign coordinator for the 2005 BC election. He is a member of Lore Krill Housing Co-op.

# contents

## FEATURES

- 15 In the spotlight: River Woods Housing Co-op** The president of this North Vancouver co-op says they're lucky to have keen volunteers where it really counts.
- 18 Section 95** Campaign co-ordinator Darren Kitchen has good news in the fight to solve the subsidy crisis.
-  **Insert: Commercial Services News**  
Introducing CHF BC's new appliance partner, Appliance Canada, serving the entire province.

## COLUMNS

- 5 Up front** with *Letters*, *Hot dates*, *On the Net* and news from BC's co-op housing sector.
- 13 Nuts + Bolts** covers the challenging task of finding and hiring contractors.
- 12 Diversity in action** suggests how to appreciate co-op youth.
- 16 National** An Ontario housing co-op is prevented from selling off its assets.
- 19 The new view** Lucas Petter spends a week at The YES Advanced Camp.
- 20 News you can use** A good governance checklist for your co-op.
- 21 International** Rooftops intern Dan Garrison helps fight HIV/AIDS with housing agencies in South Africa.



**hot dates** Mark your calendars for upcoming co-op housing events you don't want to miss. Mainland **5** Vancouver Island **11**.



7



21

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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 [sevans@chf.bc.ca](mailto:sevans@chf.bc.ca). You can get a free printed copy by visiting our offices at 200-5550 Fraser Street in Vancouver or 410-1105 Pandora Avenue in Victoria.

**ON THE COVER:** Members and children at River Woods housing co-op enjoy an evening in the courtyard.

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# up front

## LETTERS

### Tidal Flats challenges BC co-ops to support Ontario

Ontario co-ops need our help. When we work together we can change things: BC's leaky co-ops are getting fixed and the subsidy money is coming back to Section 95 co-ops.

My co-op recently voted to donate \$100 to the Fix the SHRA Fund. We challenge other BC co-ops to meet or beat that amount.

If we all give a little we can help Ontario members get their co-ops back.

Emily Drew  
Tidal Flats Housing Co-op,  
Vancouver

*This is a great challenge! In fact, several BC co-ops, including Granville Gardens, Le Coeur and Lore Krill have already sent cheques. Let's show our friends in Ontario that we appreciate their help to fix our leaky co-ops and that we support their campaign to fix the Social Housing Reform Act.*



## hot dates

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

<b>Jul</b>	<b>31</b>	Vancouver Pride Parade (see p.7)
<b>Sep</b>	<b>12</b>	Delegates Forum
<b>Oct</b>	<b>10</b>	Delegates Forum
	<b>22</b>	Fall Education Conference

## chip rates

Rates effective June 1, 2005, and subject to change.

<b>CCEC</b> – variable	1.45%
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<b>Coast Capital</b> (Vancouver Island)	2.0%
<b>Prospera</b> (formerly Fraser Valley)	1.25%
<b>VanCity</b>	2.193%

## WANTED

### YOUR SUMMER STORY FOR SCOOP

Did you take any photos at your co-op's summer party? Is your co-op garden in full bloom? We want to hear from you for SCOOP – your co-op magazine.

All entries qualify for our SCOOP prize draw!

And we have a winner. Malgorzata Sienkiewicz from Grandview Co-op wins a \$30 gift certificate to White Spot. Thanks everyone for your submissions!

Send photos, stories, questions, anything to CHF BC, attention: SCOOP, 200 – 5550 Fraser Street, Vancouver BC V5W 2Z4 or email [scoop@chf.bc.ca](mailto:scoop@chf.bc.ca).

## Federal budget includes \$1.6 billion for housing!

May's closely watched federal budget vote passed by one vote, averting a late spring election. Besides allowing Canadians a bit of a rest from politics, this was very good news for co-ops and other affordable housing advocates. The amended budget, negotiated with the NDP, included \$1.6 billion for affordable housing. The money is not tied to matching provincial funding, so it signals an opportunity to focus federal resources on the 1.7 million Canadians who need affordable housing.

This is also good news because the delayed election gives us time to work with Minister Joe Fontana and CMHC to finalize

a solution to the subsidy crisis affecting Section 95 co-ops (see p. 18).

Thanks to co-op members in BC and across Canada for getting our message to MPs about the need to find a solution to the section 95 subsidy crisis.

## Agency agreement signed

The new Co-operative Housing Programs Administration Agency (the Agency) has signed an agreement with the federal government through CMHC that will see the gradual transfer of program management responsibility starting in early 2006. The Hon. Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing, signed the agreement with Agency president, Raymond Hession,

at Daly Housing Co-op in Ottawa on May 3, 2005. The agreement affects federal program housing co-ops in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and PEI. The Agency is now set to open offices across the country, beginning with its head office in Ottawa in early 2006. Affected housing co-ops will be advised in advance of the date from which they will begin dealing with the Agency. For information about the Agency, visit their new website at [www.agency.coop](http://www.agency.coop).

## SAGM highlights good news

CHF BC members gathered in Burnaby on April 30 for the Federation's semi-annual general meeting. The meeting featured the good news that the federal government has promised to fix the section 95 subsidy crisis.



Left: Agency president, Raymond Hession (left) shakes hands with Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing (right) after signing the agreement authorizing the transfer of program authority to the Agency from CMHC. Photo courtesy of CHF Canada.

Below: Delegates swap stories and ideas during lunch at CHF BC's semi-annual general meeting.



Federation staff put in a plug for co-ops at this year's Vancouver Sun Run. Pictured are some of the Rousing Co-op Housing Team after the run at Twin Rainbows Co-op.



Members passed two resolutions: one underlining CHF BC's resolve to lead the campaign to create new housing co-ops, and one supporting Ontario co-ops in their fight against the SHRA legislation which robs them of their autonomy.

CHF BC announced a new commercial services partner for appliances – Appliance Canada West – expanding service to members on Vancouver Island and the BC Interior.

Other good news included a budget for next year featuring the lowest dues increase in more than five years (5 cents per unit per month). Membership dues for the year beginning August 1, 2005 will be \$3.05 per unit per month.

For more detail on the meeting, including next year's budget, visit the members' section of [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca).

## Support for single moms

Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver is in the unique situation of having more volunteers than kids. If you are a single mother in Vancouver, Burnaby or North Vancouver with a boy age 7 through 12 in a father-absent home, call Rosalie at 604.876.2447 ext. 240 for information on how to sign up.

And the YWCA of Vancouver has just launched a new program called Journeys for single women parents. The Journeys program hosts weekly group meetings in neighbourhoods throughout Vancouver featuring speakers, workshops and resources dedicated to ensuring women have what they need. Child minding is provided during the sessions. For more information, call 604.895.5789.

## Join us at the Vancouver Pride Parade

Join fellow co-op members and be part of the 2005 Pride Parade in Vancouver on Sunday, July 31 with our co-op housing float. You don't have to be part of the LGBT community to march: you simply have to support and believe in diversity. There will be a float decorating party on Saturday, July 30. For information on participating or helping out, call 604.879.5111, toll-free at 1.866.879.5111 or email [info@chf.bc.ca](mailto:info@chf.bc.ca)

## New members

CHF BC extends a warm welcome to several new and returning members: Alf Toone, Blueberry Vale, Meadowlands, Okanagan, and River Woods (see profile on p. 15)

CHF BC now represents 224 co-ops and 11,700 co-op homes. We just keep growing and growing as more co-ops see the benefits of joining their regional federation.



There was a great energy and sense of community at the Opening Doors door painting parties.



## Opening Doors painting parties celebrate heroes in our midst

Over 60 co-op members came together at Mitraniketan and Granville Gardens co-ops in April to celebrate CHF BC's Opening Doors project. Painting our door was a chance to reflect on the issue of abuse – how damaging it is to live with, how hard it is to leave, and how important it is to have community support.

Co-op members shared inspiring stories of leaving abusive relationships. With statistics telling us that 1 in 4 Canadian women has experienced violence from a past or present male partner and that BC has the highest rate of violence reported by women, it was empowering to

be part of such a strong show of community commitment supporting women's right to live violence-free.

Planning these parties was half the fun, and a creative, hard-working group of youth took on this challenge. From shopping and preparing food to performing during the event, these young people did it all.

A big thanks to Alyssa dela Cruz Yip, Tanika Dodds, Siobhan Hyde, Erik Knutsen and Samantha Tong. Thanks as well to Mitraniketan and Granville Gardens co-ops for hosting these wonderful events.

Since these events, the door has been displayed at the "Hidden Heroes: women survivors of abuse" art exhibit in Vancouver and at CHF BC's

semi-annual general meeting.

It is now on its way to Edmonton for the CHF Canada annual general meeting.

For more information about Opening Doors, contact Jelena Putnik at 604.879.5111 ext. 146 or [jputnik@chf.bc.ca](mailto:jputnik@chf.bc.ca).

## British Columbian appointed to Stab Fund

Halina Kuras has been appointed to serve as a trustee to the Co-operative Housing Stabilization Fund. The Stabilization Fund was established by CMHC and CHF Canada in 1989 as an independent body to authorize and administer loans to ILM housing co-ops in financial difficulties. A Stabilization Fund loan is the ILM version



of a CMHC workout for a Section 95 co-op.

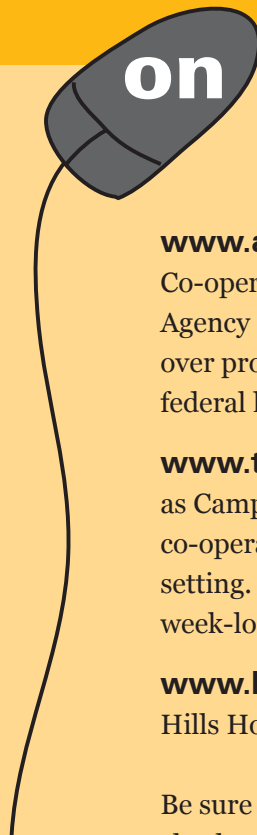
“I’m quite happy with the appointment,” says Kuras, who is the finance and operations manager of COHO Management Services Society. “I’m told that BC has contributed several trustees to the Fund over the years, and I look forward to the challenge.” Her appointment brings BC representation on the seven-member board to two, alongside Jamie Ritchie of Columbia Housing.

## Youth – Enter CHF BC’s draw for a free week at camp

If you’re 14 to 16 years old and live in a CHF BC member housing co-op, then you could win a free week at the YES basic camp at Cowichan Lake from July 24 to 30.

All you have to do is send a letter to CHF BC, 200 – 5550 Fraser Street, Vancouver BC V5W 2Z4 (or email [info@chf.bc.ca](mailto:info@chf.bc.ca)) saying you’d like to go. Include your birth date, contact information and the name of your co-op. The deadline for entries is July 8.

For more information on YES, read Lucas Petter’s camper’s journal in the New View on page 19.



## THE NET

**www.agency.coop** The website of the Co-operative Housing Programs Administration Agency (the Agency) which will gradually take over program management responsibilities for federal housing co-ops starting in 2006 (see p. 6).

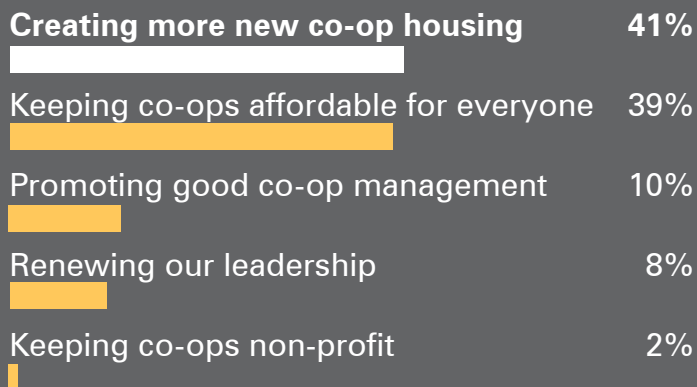
**www.theyes.ca** The YES, formerly known as Camp Rainbow, is a powerful introduction to co-operative leadership in a stimulating outdoor setting. The YES welcomes people age 14 to 16 to week-long, live-in camp retreats.

**www.halstonhills.com** Website of Halston Hills Housing Co-op in Burnaby.

Be sure to visit [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca) regularly to checkout our latest news, polls, and the useful resources and chat boards in the Members Section.

## CHF BC web poll

**What’s the biggest long-term challenge we must overcome by 2020?**



Be sure to visit [www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca) regularly to checkout our latest news, polls, and the useful resources and chat boards in the Members Section.

[www.chf.bc.ca](http://www.chf.bc.ca)

## New appliance program for all BC members

**A** couple of years ago CHF BC promised to make appliances available to Vancouver Island members through our group-buying program. We recently went to tender on the appliance contract with the condition that the successful bidder must be able to offer the same products, level of service and prices to our Vancouver Island members.

We are pleased to announce that we have selected Appliance Canada West as our new commercial services appliance partner serving every CHF BC member housing co-op in BC!

Appliance Canada is a Canadian company specializing in quality replacement appliances for multi-unit housing developments since 1968. They carry a full range of major household appliances to meet your needs including Frigidaire, Maytag and Whirlpool. Where possible, they also feature appliances meeting the Energy Star standards – protecting the environment through increased energy efficiency.

For more information about Appliance Canada, see the Commercial Services insert in the centre of this issue of SCOOP. And if you have questions or would like more information about this program, contact Julie Hunter, CHF BC commercial services director at 1.866.879.5111 ext.138 or email [jhunter@chf.bc.ca](mailto:jhunter@chf.bc.ca) ■



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Opposite page – Top: Appliance Canada West general manager, David Mooney, congratulates Northridge delegate, Avis Michalovsky, for winning the microwave oven door prize at the recent Vancouver Island Council meeting.

Bottom: Delegates enjoying a break at the Island Council meeting: David Malette (left), Superior Street Co-op, and Tony Sprackett, Spring Ridge Co-op.

## island news

### Island Council meeting best ever

The Vancouver Island Council meeting on May 31 attracted 41 people, with 17 co-ops represented.

Members heard about the Section 95 subsidy fix, the new CHF BC partnership with Appliance Canada, and an update on the budget passed at CHF BC's semi-annual general meeting in April. Members appreciated the opportunity to ask questions, enjoyed the opportunity to network and took home some great prizes.

The next council meeting will be October 13, 2005. Mark your calendar now.

### New Island member

CHF BC extends a warm welcome to Alf Toone Housing Co-op. This brings CHF BC's member total to 33 out of 34 Island co-ops! ■



## island dates

Come and get all fired up about co-op housing:

**Oct 13**  
Vancouver Island Council  
Location TBA

**22**  
Fall Education  
Conference  
Burnaby

**Nov 5**  
Island Education Day  
Location TBA

## island chip rates

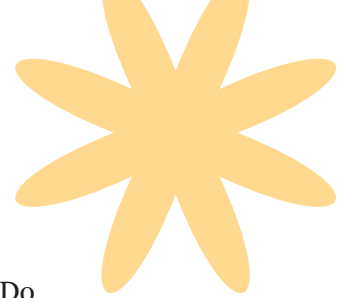
These preferred rates for CHF BC member co-op operating accounts were effective June 1, 2005 and are subject to change.

**Coast Capital** 2.0%  
(Vancouver Island)

**VanCity** 2.193%

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





## Our youth

are such an important asset in our co-ops. Their presence helps shape our communities, and they help us to celebrate our diversity. The youth living in our co-ops are our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters, our neighbours, our helpers, and our friends. A youth can be:

- a 10-year-old who helps on clean-up day
- a 14-year-old who plays loud music
- a 15-year-old who baby sits for co-op members
- a 16-year-old who sprays graffiti on the office wall
- an 18-year-old who drag races on co-op roads
- a 20-year-old who chairs the Newsletter Committee

CHF BC's website has a new page to promote diversity in our co-op communities. Visit [www.chf.bc.ca/diversity.asp](http://www.chf.bc.ca/diversity.asp) or go to the homepage on click on the "diversity" link to check it out.

These are all youth, doing the things that youth do. Youth living in our co-ops have creative minds. They are our future members; our future leaders.

When we look at youth in our co-ops what do we see, young people who cause trouble? Don't listen? Don't follow the rules?

Look more closely. Do we ask them what they think about the co-op or issues the co-operative is dealing with? Do we involve them in problem solving? Do we listen and learn from their abilities? Do we value our youth? Do we ask them for their ideas?

What do youth in our communities want? Like all youth everywhere, they want:

- a home
- trust
- acceptance
- opportunity
- fun
- respect

Let's really include our youth in our community, to make it a better place for all of us to live. ■

This article is an excerpt from CHF Canada's Diversity in Action pamphlet series. 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).

**Wes Hosler** sits on CHF BC's Diversity Committee and is a member of Lore Krill Housing Co-op.

## Legal consultation for co-ops

Co-op directors can seek legal advice from three lawyers experienced in co-op housing law. This service includes consultation on the following:

- ▶ General co-op issues
- ▶ Co-op Association Act
- ▶ Occupancy agreement
- ▶ Contract interpretation
- ▶ Member disputes
- ▶ Rules

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# Nuts + bolts

## Hiring a contractor

*As our co-ops get older, good maintenance is more important than ever. Hiring the right contractor for major jobs is critical. Here's some advice on where to begin.*

### Finding and choosing a contractor

Start by looking for several suitable contractors. A good source of referrals may be another co-op that has had similar work completed. Other sources are your local home builders and renovators associations; local building supply stores; in some municipalities your local building department; and contractors' websites on the Internet.

Discuss your project with a few potential contractors to get their advice and suggestions on how they would do the work. You will want to find out as much as you can about someone you may be working with, so ask a lot of questions (e.g. How long have you been in business? Have you done a similar job before? What warranties do you offer? Do you carry workers' compensation and liability insurance?) If the contractor plans to do the whole job alone, make sure s/he has all of the necessary skills and qualifications. Be sure you can get along. If you cannot communicate effectively, things can get very tense in a lengthy project. You

want a contractor who will explain what's going on as the project takes shape, discuss problems reasonably and work with you to make the result as good as it can be.

The best proof of quality is satisfied customers. The contractors you decide to meet with should have references from at least three previous clients who have had similar work done. Don't accept the references at face value. Phone them and ask about their experience with the contractor and their trades people and ask them if they were satisfied with the quality of the work.

### Getting estimates

As a general rule, with the proper drawings and specifications, three estimates will usually provide sufficient information for you to make a decision. To get estimates, especially for substantial projects, you'll need detailed specifications. Even with a small project, a set of written specifications is needed. Be as specific as you can: what type of flooring, what kind and brand of doors and windows, what kind of finishes you want.

Ask the contractor to submit the estimate in person so you can discuss it with them. Compare the estimate carefully and make sure that everything you ask for is included. Assume that anything not listed is not included in the price. As well, make sure the contractor provides you with a construction schedule.

Don't automatically choose the contractor who gives the lowest estimate. It may be unrealistically low. The contractor may not have understood the project, may be underestimating what it will take to complete the work, or simply trying to get a price advantage over the competitors. In any case, you could risk unexpected and additional costs, or you may end up with a job that leaves you unsatisfied.

And don't be tempted by a contractor who doesn't have an address, doesn't want a written contract and offers a discount if you pay cash. This type of underground economy transaction involves many risks and pitfalls that can offset any savings to the co-op. ■

This information is based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation pamphlet CE 26a. To read the entire article, which also explains how to work with the contractor you hired, visit [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca) and use the search tool to find "hiring a contractor".



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## in the spotlight

River Woods' board of directors: (front, from left) Cheryl Brooks, Sherri Davids, Eli Hedal, Kim Fancher, (back, from left) Simon Evans, Trevor Watson, and Mick Moran. Missing are Diane Bennett and Glenn Madsen.



# River Woods

Nestled in the trees of North Vancouver rests the comfortable community of River Woods Housing Co-op.

With its main courtyard of park-style benches focussed around a large and well-used playground, one wonders what came first: the relaxed members chatting with neighbours and watching frolicking kids, or the friendly courtyard layout and fixtures that seem so suited to socializing. The whole scene practically beckons people out of their units.

"We were totally attracted to the family-oriented community atmosphere here," says 15-year member and current co-op president Sherri Davids. "It's so very different from living in an apartment."

"We're very fortunate here because we've always had people who step up to the plate at the board and committee levels," says Davis. "We've been told that we're well run here. And the co-op is well maintained, with a lot of work done by volunteers. Of course, some things are contracted out but we have plumbers, electricians and lots of handy people."

With a plaque for the co-op's golf tournament hanging on the common room wall, it's clear that River Woods members don't just see each other at committee meetings. Social barbecues are regular events in the summer, and the board hosts a formal celebration once a year with fun activities and awards. Celebrations such as Valentine's, Saint Patrick's and regular bingo nights all make for a warm and welcoming community spirit.

"We watch out for one another," says Davids. "We've had several instances where we hear by the grapevine, because it's a small community, that somebody is having financial problems. We all kind of pitch in and take something over or put something on the doorstep for them, to help them get through."

"For our elderly, some members tend to go in on a daily basis to check in, see that they're eating and that they're taking their medications. And for the kids playing in the courtyard,

there's always someone around to make sure they're okay and to help out if needed."

Of course, every co-op has its challenges. "Right now participation is something we're working on," says Davids. "It's not really a problem, but people's work schedules tend to be different than they used to be. Instead of saying that you have to be on a committee, I think we have to broaden the definition of participation, so that we consider that some people do shift work or have changing schedules."

"Another big concern right now is our subsidy, so we do monitor that. Right now we're not taking in any new subsidized members. We're very interested in seeing how the campaign goes to fix these Section 95 subsidies."

With its 20-year anniversary under its belt last year, it seems River Woods is certainly on the right track. "I just feel that it's a privilege to live here," says Davids. "I really do." ■

*River Woods is a new CHF BC member. Welcome, River Woods, on behalf of your 223 fellow member co-ops across the province!*

# Co-op sale halted by court decision

“I believe in co-op housing,” says Ken Skinner, a member of Bridlewood Housing Co-operative in Essex, Ontario. “I volunteer at the local food bank and I see the housing problems of needy people.”

That’s why he was “elated” by an Ontario Superior Court decision on April 5 that the sale of the co-op’s units to the members at less than half the market value is not allowed under the province’s Co-operative Corporations Act.

Bridlewood is a 131-unit non-profit housing co-op developed in the mid-1970s with federal government funding. In 2003, the members decided to investigate the sale of the units to the members who currently occupy them, at prices considerably less than their fair market value.

Skinner, who has lived in the co-op for 27 years, got in touch with CHF Canada, which joined him in an application to halt the sale. CHF Canada contacted the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO), which has responsibility to enforce

compliance with the Co-operative Corporations Act, and urged them to act quickly. FSCO also brought an application to stop the sale.

“I found it unbelievable that they would try to dissolve the co-op,” Mr. Skinner said. “I’m very thankful for CHF Canada and everybody that got involved. This will help the preservation of other co-ops.”

Justice H.J.W. Siegel, in an Ontario Superior Court decision on April 5, concluded that “as the Bridlewood proposal contemplates a sale to the members of property of the Co-op at less than its fair market value, if implemented, the proposal would constitute a ‘distribution’ for the purposes of section 171.2(1) of the CCA.” The Co-operative Corporations Act prohibits distribution of the assets of a non-profit housing co-operative to the co-op’s members.

CHF Canada members, who support the preservation of non-profit co-operative housing, were quick to congratulate Skinner on the decision.

“His actions are setting a precedent that will preserve our co-ops as non profit for the future,” said Gino Gamboa, a member of Terra Nova Housing Co-op in Richmond, BC.

“This is a vital decision for the future of co-op housing in Canada,” said Nicholas Gazzard, CHF Canada’s acting executive director. “It will help to preserve affordable social housing. CHF Canada’s members don’t want to see the stock of non-profit housing co-ops sold off at any price.”

Dale Reagan, the managing director of CHF Canada’s Ontario Region, said “We fought long and hard to get changes to the Ontario Co-op Act to protect the public investment in co-op housing. This case was a critically important test of that law and the judge’s decision makes it clear that the law works.” ■

**Merrilee Robson** is CHF Canada’s communications officer. You can reach Merrilee at 1.877.533.2667 (879.4116 in Vancouver) or [mrobson@chfc.coop](mailto:mrobson@chfc.coop).





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# Campaign on the verge of success!

Section

95



**A**s this issue of SCOOP goes to print, we have seen significant progress in the campaign to fix the Section 95 subsidy crisis. While CHF Canada has concentrated on lobbying in Ottawa, CHF BC has met with BC MPs of all parties to urge them to press for a solution to this problem.

We have concentrated on winning agreement on two points:

- ➔ changing the subsidy formula so co-op subsidies never go down (or up) by more than the change in their mortgage payments. This will stop the net loss of subsidy when co-ops renew their mortgages.
- ➔ providing new federal assistance to Section 95 co-ops so they can subsidize up to 50% of their units, or the same number they assisted before their last mortgage renewal – whichever is higher. This will allow co-ops to house many more low-income people.

So far, the campaign has succeeded on the first point: Minister Fontana announced on April 22 that from now on mortgage payments and subsidy dollars will move up or down together, dollar for dollar. This is an important victory, preventing any further erosion of our ability to house low-income members.

Agreement on the second point has yet to be finalised, though we are cautiously optimistic that a solution is not far off. Minister Fontana has agreed that the issue must be addressed. A solution may have been announced by the time you read this article.

Libby Davies (NDP–Vancouver East) has followed this issue for months and has written and spoken to the Minister on many occasions. Bill Siksay (NDP–Burnaby Douglas) organised a meeting for co-ops in his riding. John Cummins (Con.–Delta-Richmond East), Nina Grewal (Con.–Fleetwood-Port Kells) and Mark Warawa (Con. – Langley) have written letters urging the Minister to solve the problem. We have received strong support from

Dr. Hedy Fry (Lib.–Vancouver Centre) and from the four BC MPs who are also cabinet members: Raymond Chan (Lib.–Richmond), Ujall Dosanjh (Lib.–Vancouver South), David Emerson (Lib.–Vancouver Kingsway) and Stephen Owen (Lib.–Vancouver Quadra). They have all taken time to meet with CHF BC and have taken the issue to cabinet and to Minister Fontana personally.

The BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, a partner in the Opening Doors program, also wrote to support us, expressing concern that loss of subsidies was a barrier to women leaving abusive relationships and in need of affordable housing.

But our strongest support came from you: our members. Dozens of co-ops wrote to their MPs, hundreds of members sent emails, and over a thousand Section 95 campaign postcards were sent to Minister Fontana. Co-op housing has again shown that an active and committed membership working together can make a real difference! ■

# Camper's journal

Lucas Petter gives an insider's account of the YES Advanced Camp.



My experience at Advanced Camp this spring break was very different from Basic Camp last summer. This time counselors didn't plan the fun. We, as future leaders, used our skills to organize and get things going, which proved to be a large part of the week's success. Another difference was the location. This time we were in Maple Ridge at the Malcolm Knapp UBC Research Forest by Loon Lake.

As before, we started each day dancing and singing at Wake and Shake and ended with Reflections, sharing our innermost thoughts in a supportive environment within our Ant Colonies of eight to twelve campers. One of my favourite parts of Basic Camp was Secret Friends, where each of us had a secret friend we did favours for anonymously during the week. Because I liked that idea so much, I organized and encouraged it for Advanced Camp as well.

During Co-operation Day, we helped each other across a "lake of lava" by using pillows as stepping stones. We also had

to work closely with a friend by sandwiching plastic cups between our knees, heads, elbows and hips and making it across the room without dropping any.

For Creativity Day, campers chose one of several stations featuring music, rap, writing, visual art or performance art. We produced skits, poems, art and songs that we presented to the other groups.

A Community Day included improvised fighting for serious issues, such as what to do when the only school and community center in town burnt down or when plans were being made for a big office building to be located in the middle of a scenic park. Large and small groups formed to discuss business, politics, religion, art, and the environment and, to keep things innovative, at one point we learned a lot by forming a company that sold specialty chalk!

During Communication Day we had a session on resolving conflict positively by using a model based on first perceiving, then analyzing, and finally checking it out with the person involved. An amazing talent show wound up the day, with one fellow dressed as Napoleon Dynamite in a "Vote for Pedro" t-shirt, doing his dance routine, while others entertained with stand-up comedy and improv. A well-used Tickle Trunk provided lots of props and costumes.

A dance wound up the last night, but not before we played Mission Impossible, when counselors used flashlights and walkie-talkies to find us in the dark and send us to "jail" to prevent us from entering a guarded area. That was a lot of screaming fun!

There were many memorable moments that week and I, for one, will be reflecting on the (p. 20) ►

**Camp rainbow has changed its name to the YES, but it's still the same great place to learn about co-operative leadership. For more info go to [www.TheYes.ca](http://www.TheYes.ca) or phone Brian Smith at 604.662.3906. Find out how you can enter to win a free week at YES Basic Camp on p.9.**

experience for a long time. This summer I'm looking forward to attending Camp Rainbow's Grad Week, which I'm sure will be even more different, but adventurous, and will give us a chance to enhance our leadership skills so that one day we'll be able to give back by becoming Camp Rainbow counselors ourselves. I can't wait! ■

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## News you can use

# Good governance checklist

Governance is the job of the directors and the members who elect them. Good governance goes hand-in-hand with good management.

The following good governance checklist is a tool for evaluating and improving governance in your co-op. You are taking positive steps toward good governance if:

- ☐ Directors and members put the interests of the co-op first.
- ☐ The co-op encourages, values, and recognizes its volunteers.
- ☐ The co-op recognizes and values diversity within its community and governance structure.
- ☐ The co-op encourages new leadership and fresh ideas.
- ☐ The co-op encourages a full slate of candidates for election to the board every year.
- ☐ Vacancies on the board are filled promptly.
- ☐ Directors sign and comply with an ethical conduct agreement.
- ☐ Each new director receives structured training.
- ☐ Directors understand the board's legal responsibilities and know the co-op's rules, occupancy agreement, policies, and organizational structure.
- ☐ Directors model co-operative behaviour.
- ☐ Directors are not in arrears or in breach of any co-op policies or rules.
- ☐ The board makes good, timely decisions.
- ☐ The board reviews management outcomes regularly and evaluates its committees, staff, or managers based on those outcomes.
- ☐ The co-op holds well organized, interesting, informative member meetings.
- ☐ The board regularly seeks input and advice from members, reports to members, and welcomes constructive feedback.
- ☐ Members understand, respect, and support the role of the directors, and the board's need to set reasonable priorities and limits.



# Social housing struggles with HIV/AIDS in South Africa

**S**outh Africa is at the centre of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. In KwaZulu-Natal Province, where eThekweni Municipality is located, 35% of adults are HIV positive.

When I arrived in eThekweni (formerly Durban), I was struck by the large number of young children living on the streets. I learned that 750,000 orphans are expected in the province by 2010. It is in this context that South African Social Housing Institutions (SHIs) must operate.

Social housing emerged in South Africa following the end of Apartheid just over a decade ago. The program has created many new housing units, but SHIs must rely almost entirely on rental income due to the lack of operating subsidies. With unemployment in the 40% range and virtually no social safety net, this is an enormous challenge for SHIs in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Rooftops Canada is working with its South African partners to

respond to the epidemic within the social housing program. When I arrived, I began working with the eThekweni Municipality and SHIs to develop an HIV/AIDS policy they could adapt to meet their needs. While we developed a sample policy, SHIs felt there were other more pressing issues to be addressed. They believe the scale of the epidemic is beyond their capacity to address alone and that the South African government needs to develop a coordinated response including shelter considerations. As a result, I refocused my work towards community development.

I worked with the eThekweni Housing Department's HIV/AIDS Committee to organize World AIDS Day events and raise the level of awareness in the housing sector. Committee members were extremely passionate and committed to raising the profile of HIV/AIDS. We held amazing educational events all over the region involving people living with HIV/AIDS. These powerful events and the people who participated in them remain my strongest memories of South Africa.

I also worked with eThekweni's Social Housing Unit to develop tenant training materials addressing basic health facts and the impacts of HIV/AIDS on social housing communities. These were extremely well received and have been used by several SHIs.

During my Rooftops internship, I learned the importance of helping connect important local players and working with communities to help them develop the capacity to address the issues they face together. Since returning from South Africa I've been working with the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. The community development approach I learned in South Africa has been invaluable for addressing homelessness in Greater Vancouver. ■



Above: Dan Garrison (left) lights a candle of hope on World AIDS Day.

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