

SCOOP

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES IN BC

GREEN EDITION

Inside:
Housing co-ops take action
Tips from the experts
CHF BC partners promote sustainability



Community is key to the fate of our planet

I think it's safe to say that few of us have life changing experiences in movie theatres, but that's what happened to me last year.

The movie was *An Inconvenient Truth* and although it aimed to change my mind (and my light bulbs) what it really changed was my heart.

Up until then, I had thought of climate change as an environmental issue. I figured that the 'heavy lifting' for a solution belonged to environmental groups specifically working on climate change. Two hours in a movie theatre convinced me that climate change is not an environmental issue – it's a global survival issue.

Scientists tell us that left unchecked greenhouse gas emissions will raise temperatures to the point that Earth will be uninhabitable in about 40 years. Everything we know, everything we care about, everything we have or could have had in the future will be gone forever.

Stopping climate change will take every one of us, in every one of our roles – mother, wife, daughter, neighbour, citizen – to bring our passion, talents and determination to create and enact the solutions to ensure survival.

As part of my efforts to bring about this change, I was fortunate to be chosen as one of 1,000 people to be trained by former US vice-president Al Gore to

deliver his slide show from the movie to local audiences. This has brought me to over 25 venues around southern BC, talking to 5,000 people about climate change, and has left me with one very powerful lesson. If we fail in this endeavour, it is not climate change that will ultimately be our demise, but our lack of connection with one other.

In human history, when major problems arose, communities would meet, discuss matters and then take collective action. The absence of that sort of connection in our modern society has led to a situation akin to Britain during World War II issuing a map of Germany to its citizens, providing an address to buy cheap guns and ammunition, and wishing them good luck.

If we want to successfully fight climate change, we need to rebuild our connections to each other, and we need to do it fast. The co-op movement is the perfect place to start and indeed that effort is already underway. One of BC's largest co-ops, Vancity, has committed to being carbon neutral by 2010 and is designing new products for home buyers to increase energy efficiency. CCEC Credit Union has for many years been the only financial institution in the province to provide loans to members who want to buy a bicycle. It's also not surprising that new enterprises springing up to meet the challenge of climate change



such as the Renewable Energy Co-op and the Co-operative Auto Network are choosing the co-op structure.

The housing co-op sector is already part of the "co-operatives as catalysts for positive change" for which climate change is a key focus. CHF Canada's 2020 Vision program has laid the groundwork for member involvement by incorporating environmental sustainability as one of its eligibility standards. And CHF BC recently produced a workshop to help housing co-ops go green. This is key work as it's estimated around 30 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions are related to the buildings we live and work in.

The next step is up to you and your co-op community. In the words of Wayne Gretzky, you miss 100 percent of the shots you never take. I hope you will choose to take action on climate change. ■

Andrea Reimer is the executive director of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and is chair of CCEC Credit Union's board of directors.

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SCOOP is now printed on 40% post consumer waste content paper, saving three trees, 311 gallons of water, 406 kilowatt hours of electricity and 514 pounds of greenhouse gases.



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Co-op notices are published separately.

Co-op notices are available at 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. 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: Co-op kids taking part in races during CHF BC's 25th anniversary member appreciation event at Trout Lake on June 16 (see p.6 for details).

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Editor	Scott Jackson sjackson@chf.bc.ca
Youth Editor	Aly dela Cruz Yip
Handy Hound	Leo Burdak
Design	EGO Creative Solutions design@egocreatives.com
Printing	Broadway Printers litho@broadwayprinters.com

CHF BC board of directors

President	Wes Hosler , Lore Krill whosler@chf.bc.ca
Vice president	Gino Gamboa , Terra Nova ggamboa@chf.bc.ca
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Co-operative Housing Federation of BC www.chf.bc.ca

Vancouver	200-5550 Fraser Street, V5W 2Z4 Tel: 604.879.5111 Fax: 604.879.4611 Toll-free: 1.866.879.5111 info@chf.bc.ca
Victoria	410-1105 Pandora Avenue, V8V 3P9 Tel: 250.384.9444 Fax: 250.384.0349 islandinfo@chf.bc.ca

up front

LETTERS

Dear SCOOP,

I've heard that co-ops with serious building envelope problems can arrange a reduction in their property taxes. If this is true, what should I do to check this out?

Any co-op, leaky or not, should review its property assessment at the beginning of each calendar year. Since the assessments are based on land and building values in the area, and generally not on an actual site inspection, your taxes may not represent the actual condition and value of your buildings. This is even more likely where there are extensive capital repairs or other maintenance needed.

Co-ops should be aware that the property assessment is an estimate of sale value – meaning, it estimates what

the property would sell for at the time of assessment. This amount forms the basis of the annual property tax calculation.

If you have a consultant's report that indicates building envelope failure, or a need for any other major capital or maintenance repair, you should consider requesting a reduction of your property tax assessment each year until those repairs are complete. The reduction requested in the tax assessment should not exceed the costs of remediation. If a co-op has management staff, they will be able to assist with this appeal. If not, the co-op's board of directors can review the property assessment, and respond with a letter, attaching any consultant's report to support the appeal.

It is important to note that the co-op would only be appealing the current value of the buildings that need major repairs. The value of the land itself should not be disputed on the basis of envelope failure.



hot dates

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

- | | | |
|------------|-----------|--|
| Aug | 5 | Housing co-ops march in Vancouver Pride Parade (see p. 9) |
| Sep | 10 | Delegates Forum |
| Oct | 9 | Delegates Forum |
| | 27 | Fall Education Conference |
| Nov | 13 | Delegates Forum |
| | 24 | Annual General Meeting and Anniversary Dinner/Dance (see this page for ad) |



25th Anniversary

Dinner & Dance

November 24, 2007

Federico's Supper Club

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(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.



25th Anniversary BBQ wet but wonderful

Cool, wet weather didn't dampen the spirits of more than 200 co-op members determined to celebrate CHF BC's 25th anniversary at Trout Lake Park in Vancouver on Saturday, June 16.

This family-friendly member appreciation event – featuring free food, games, prizes and live entertainment – attracted record attendance for a CHF BC event. And the weather wasn't the only reason that some people got wet.

Held at the picnic area next to Trout Lake – with tents and games stations with something for everyone – the BBQ drew a huge co-op crowd, including 60 children. It all made for a wonderful carnival-like atmosphere. The Federation's board of directors and staff took turns at the barbecues and games tents to make sure that co-op members had a great time and felt truly appreciated for supporting CHF BC.



Many of our sector partners sponsored this celebration. Thanks to the following organizations for helping make this event such a success:

Terra Property Management, Pacific Wholesale Appliances, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Emelle's Catering, East End Food Co-op, COHO Management, COHO Repair Services, CD Contract, Cana Management and CHF Canada.

"My daughter, granddaughter and myself had a wonderful time at the picnic Saturday at Trout Lake," wrote Mary Strickler of Riverside Landing Housing Co-op. "Thanks to all who made such an effort so

that we could enjoy the food, activities, and above all, the opportunity to meet some of the nicest people."

We look forward to seeing members again in the fall for CHF BC's other anniversary event, the dinner/dance on November 24 at Federico's Supper Club (see ad on p.5). There are still some tickets remaining for this not-to-be-missed anniversary party, which follows the Federation's annual general meeting. Be sure to get yours before they sell out.



For more photos from this and other anniversary events, visit our website at www.chf.bc.ca.

CHF BC staff and directors served members free food and made sure everyone was having fun. More than 200 people attended the BBQ at Trout Lake. Members told us they had a great time.

Below: One of several people who volunteered to get soaked at the water balloon dunk game. Right: Sister DJ's Radio Band kept things lively.



CHF BC members meet with MPs

Members met with Federal Opposition Leader Stéphane Dion on May 22 at Pine Ridge Housing Co-op in Burnaby. Dion toured a Pine Ridge co-op home, then met with 33 co-op members representing 14 Lower Mainland housing co-ops. BC MPs Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre), Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South), and Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton-

North Delta) accompanied Mr. Dion on his Pine Ridge visit. Burnaby Douglas Liberal candidate Bill Cunningham arranged the stop on Dion's busy schedule.

Dion did not make any specific promises other than to consider the proposals given to him by CHF BC and CHF Canada representatives at the meeting. These proposals include a federal investment to create more co-operative housing and a 5-year, \$30-million program of loans and

incentives to make housing co-ops more environmentally sustainable.

A month later, on June 29, members met again at another Burnaby co-op – this time Halston Hills – for a Conversation on Co-op Housing with NDP MPs Dawn Black (New Westminster-Coquitlam), Libby Davies (Vancouver East), Peter Julian (Burnaby-New Westminster) and Bill Siksay (Burnaby-Douglas). More than 20 members turned out to share ideas.



Left: Federal Opposition Leader, Stéphane Dion, pictured here with co-op members Catherine and Glen Porter, visited Pine Ridge Housing Co-op in Burnaby.

Below: NDP MPs Libby Davies, Peter Julian, Dawn Black and Bill Siksay met with CHF BC members at Halston Hills Co-op.



Community Alternatives, Trafalgar and CAN first to pay dues

Thank you to Community Alternatives and Trafalgar housing co-ops and to the Co-operative Auto Network for being the first members to pay dues for our year beginning August 1, 2007. Dues invoices were mailed on June 21 and these co-ops took less than three working days to send a cheque! Thanks as well to the many other members who pay dues so promptly. Your strong support helps CHF BC serve you better.

diversity in action

March with Pride on August 5

All co-op members are encouraged to join our delegation at the Vancouver Pride Parade. Let's celebrate the diverse communities we live in and in particular our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered members. This event takes place on Sunday, August 5 near Stanley Park. We will meet at 9:30 am to socialize and do the decorating. The parade begins at 12:00 pm. For the exact meeting point and more information, visit www.chf.bc.ca or contact CHF BC at 604.879.5111 or info@CHF.bc.ca.



A few of the 60 co-op members who attended CHF BC's 25th anniversary Island member appreciation barbeque on May 26.



island dates

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

- Oct 17** Vancouver Island Council
- Oct 28** Fall Education Conference, Burnaby
- Nov 3** Island Education Day
- 24** Annual General Meeting, Burnaby and Anniversary Dinner/Dance, Vancouver (see p.5)

island chip rates

Preferred rates for CHF BC member co-op accounts. Rates effective July 12, 2007 and subject to change.

Coast Capital 4.00 %
(Vancouver Island)

VanCity 4.193 %

Anniversary barbecue draws Island members

Island members celebrated CHF BC's 25th anniversary on May 26 with a Member Appreciation barbeque. The day was a great success with 60 people turning out on a sunny Saturday afternoon to enjoy delicious barbeque food, games, cake and ice cream, popsicles, prizes and more.

CHF BC directors Candice Bunting, Larry Maralia and Wes Hosler and executive director Thom Armstrong barbequed non-stop to keep plates full and everyone happy. CHF BC president Wes Hosler thanked people for coming and for their strong support.

Sincere thanks to the Member Appreciation Committee and the many co-op members and co-op youth who helped organize this event. Thanks as well to our generous event sponsors: Alive Painting, BFI, Cameo Housing Co-op, COHO Repair Services, COHO Management, Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, Craigflower Housing Co-op, Leon's Hauling, Oughtred Coffee, Pacific Wholesale Appliances, Wendy's Colwood, and Vancouver Island Distribution. ■

Oak Bay president
Jo-Ann Leonard oversees
the fridge delivery
from Pacific Wholesale
Appliances.



Oak Bay loves new PWA fridges

Members of Oak Bay Kiwanis Housing Co-op are extremely pleased with their decision to go with CHF BC's commercial services partner, Pacific Wholesale Appliances for their recent purchase of 35 Frigidaire fridges.

PWA paired up with Albatross Delivery to assist them with the delivery challenge of uncrating and placing the fridges in Oak Bay's three-storey walk-up building.

"You never saw anything so good in your life" says Merle Hansen, the co-op's maintenance coordinator. "There was so much potential to have so many things go wrong and nothing did. It was marvelous."

"The fridges are beautiful," says co-op president Jo-Ann Leonard. "Everything was professionally done. We are very pleased."

And the bottom line was better with PWA as well with prices beating the Kenmore prices quoted by Sears. Like many co-ops, the members at Oak Bay were under the impression that appliances are manufactured by the company name on their label. Not so says PWA General Manager, David Harapiak. Eighty percent of Kenmore products sold in Canada are manufactured by Whirlpool. Inglis, as it turns out, is also a brand of Whirlpool.

If your co-op is in the market for new appliances give Pacific Wholesale a call. They have over 40 years experience and service all areas of BC. Contact David Harapiak or Sherry Madden at 604.270.2460 or tollfree 1.877.214.0848. ■

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Youth in the spotlight at BCCA annual meeting

On June 1st, the BC Co-operative Association(BCCA) held its first-ever Youth AGM at UBC's Liu Institute. The turnout included a vast array of people representing various co-ops. It was darn nifty meeting people from such a wide range of organizations, all fundamentally based on the universal co-op principles. What was even more intriguing was witnessing a bunch of adults participating in modified camp activities that I myself took part in way back when I was a YES camper.

During the event, I had the privilege of sitting on a 45-minute panel along with reps from UBC's Bike Co-op, Vancity, Sprouts (UBC's food co-op), BCCA's The New Practice and The YES. This exchange tackled youth involvement in co-ops, and the

discussion started at its most basic and eventually graduated to a logical linking between youth involvement and sustainability (in the environmental sense that's très chic as of late). It also covered the co-op movement's ongoing task of continuity and our generation's vital role within it. In short, the forum was fairly well rounded despite its brief duration.

Project to improve accessibility at Camp YES

Another highlight of BCCA's AGM was the launch of Camp YES' hip new Youth Including Youth project. Here is a description, courtesy of YIY coordinator Sarah Hyde:

Free and open membership has always been the way we conducted ourselves at Camp YES – well sort of. There are of some stipulations on who can attend;

they need to be 14-18 years old. But Camp YES has always gone one step further than simply free and open membership, and I think it is important that we be active in this tradition.

This year at YES we're changing something. We are making our program inclusive for youth with disabilities, or rather youth are making our program more inclusive for youth with disabilities. Hence the name of this project: Youth Including Youth.

In BC approximately 12% of the population lives with a disability. This 12% was not previously represented at camp. Camp becomes better the more diverse the backgrounds of individuals who participate are, so how do we reach out to include this particular branch of wisdom: the wisdom of young people with disabilities? Camp YES is not trying to be a camp that specifically caters to the disability community but we ► p. 21

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City Green pilot project saves energy and money for housing co-ops

Over the past year, CHF BC has partnered with City Green Solutions, an enterprising non-profit organization coordinating the provincial government's Energy Savings Plan (ESP).

Ten housing co-ops have received subsidized energy efficiency assessments from City Green. Five of these co-ops have completed the recommended energy efficiency upgrades and collectively received approximately \$50,000 in Energy Savings Plan grants.

City Green estimates these energy efficiency upgrades will collectively result in annual savings of:

- 829 megawatt hours (electricity savings)
- 3196 gigajoules (gas savings)
- 458 tonnes of carbon emissions
- \$86,000 in cost savings on energy bills

"We do energy assessments for residential buildings and then help homeowners access federal government funds as grants," says City Green executive director, Peter Sundberg. "On the other side we try to get funding to offer these assessments for free to non-profit and co-operative housing."

CHF BC also partnered with City Green to promote the ESP Low Flow Showerhead Program which resulted in member co-ops receiving 1,996 low flow showerheads. City Green estimates the showerhead giveaway will collectively result in annual savings of:

- 189,620,000 litres of water (assuming a family of three per unit)
- 149 tonnes of carbon emissions
- \$34,000 in annual cost savings on energy bills

"Essentially," says Peter, "the province has realized that BC faces electricity generation issues in the coming years, and it's more cost effective to invest in energy efficiency than to build new generation facilities."

City Green is now proposing that the province institute a sustained program. They are also urging Environment Canada to establish a free long-term energy assessment program for co-op and non-profit housing. They hope to have something up and running this fall and will publicize their progress through CHF BC.



Sunshine Co-op member, Susan L'Heureux, shows off her newly installed low flow showerhead, courtesy of City Green.



For information about future energy efficiency programs, including the Affordable Warmth BC project, go to www.citygreen.ca



Vancity staffer helping members go green

Vancity is another organization that has partnered with CHF BC on the environmental front this year.

BC's largest credit union recently launched a Carbon Offset Program to invest in Canadian solutions to climate change. And last year, they hired Maureen Cureton as an in-house environmental consultant to determine the best way to meet its members' sustainability goals.

Maureen offers free energy efficiency consultations to Vancity members, and she jointly taught a "Greening Your Co-op" workshop with City Green Solutions at CHF BC's spring education conference.

She teaches sustainability at Royal Roads University, and has written books on energy efficiency in buildings and green real estate. With an MBA, Maureen takes a very business-like, results-based approach to her discipline.

"When I teach I tend to focus on the facts: sustainability is a cost saver, a differentiator, it is an opportunity to be an innovator and a market leader. I'll use all the business parlance," says Maureen. If they want to throw in values, she says, that's great, but she doesn't count on that argument to convince organizations. When she was first hired by Vancity, she planned to focus on businesses, but then discovered that the credit union actually has quite a large portfolio of non-profits, including not-for-profit and co-operative housing.

She is now putting the finishing touches on the idea of a what she calls a Groan: a combination grant/loan that would serve as a zero interest way for organizations such as housing co-ops to cover the capital costs of an energy efficiency upgrade. The Groan would pay for itself with the savings on energy bills.

Asked to suggest the best ways for co-ops to go green, Maureen replies "efficient lighting is an easy solution for residential buildings. BC Hydro is behind this, so it's a good way to get money for co-op housing associations if they pay a commercial rate on their hydro, for common areas, hallways, and laundry rooms. Lots of stratas have taken advantage of this."

Maureen says solar heating and other big ticket projects are sexy but not as effective as simple things like weather stripping, efficient lighting, heating and boilers.

Ford Road uses envelope repairs to do green renos

City Green showed Ford Road, a 160-unit co-op located in Pitt Meadows, how to get \$18,000 in sustainability grants towards a project cost of \$240,000. These grants helped them switch to high efficiency windows, ventilation systems, hot water heaters and insulated plumbing.

"We're already saving \$400 a month on hydro on the one small 15-unit building we've completed," says Ford Road's envelope repair project liaison, Colleen Burns.

That doesn't count the expected savings from switching to efficient LED security lighting for the grounds and parking areas.

Ford Road also participated in City Green's free low-flow showerhead giveaway.

"I think with the showerheads and efficient water heating, Ford Road is going to see even more savings in their energy bills," says Colleen. "Best of all, City Green's help was free. It's been awesome!"

"I'm not entirely convinced that we have the appropriate climate to get the best bang for your buck for things like solar heating in the Lower Mainland," says Maureen. "Maybe in the BC Interior it would make better sense.

She says green is beyond energy too – having onsite composters for example. There are all sorts of no-cost solutions for co-ops that, although not as visible as a solar panel, will mean more to help improve the fate of the planet.

"What you do depends on your motivation," says Maureen. "Do you want to save energy or water? Do you want to be less dependent on oil? Do you want to be carbon neutral? Personally, I wish everyone cared about all of this. From what I've seen, I think co-op members do care, and I think that's really heartening."



Green links

For co-op members interested in sustainability, Maureen recommends these online resources:

BC Hydro's Power Smart program (www.bchydro.com/powersmart/) includes an online calculator called Analyze My Home

Fortis Power's energy use calculator (www.fortisbc.com) helps you figure out the amount and cost of your household electricity use.

The Pembina Institute's carbon impact calculator (www.onelesstonne.ca) helps determine your carbon emissions footprint and how to change it.

Rocky Mountain Institute (www.rmi.org) has lots of information on household energy efficiency.

View Court considers solar water heating

By View Court's Green Committee

"It'll pay for itself in 8 years."
That's how solar water heating was introduced for discussion at View Court. We're a 32 unit co-op in a small 3-storey walk-up and 2-storey house built nearly a century ago. Our members have a stated interest in being green, our mortgage was paid off, and we needed to replace our roof soon. Here was an opportunity to put our ideas into practice!

Members recently added "ecological sustainability" as a core value and we have green policies to strive to "eliminate our community's dependence on non-renewable resources and reduce wastefulness", and to "reduce our exposure to substances that have negative impacts on humans or our environment."

However, we needed to know whether a solar project was feasible before investing our limited resources, and the re-roofing project was moving

forward. If we were going to use solar panels, we needed to make sure the new roof would be compatible. We had missed a free BC Government building assessment, then the one we had done at a minimal cost missed a boiler hidden in the basement and didn't compensate for us having gas stoves, so it was not reliable for making decisions.


We decided to invest in a professional assessment that would become part of the implementation plan should we decide to go ahead. Taylor Munro charged for their assessment of our buildings, but will discount the actual installation by the same amount if we use their services for the building phase. Their engineering reports clearly lay out the costs and benefits of two options with differing solar panel arrays. They document the

predicted energy offsets, greenhouse gas reduction, costs and return on investment.

The results were not as good as we'd hoped. We would recover our costs in 16 years with an expected equipment lifespan of 35 years. This sounds less positive when the ten-year warranty is taken into account. We decided that we were still sufficiently optimistic and committed to build in studs for solar panels as part of our new roof. We're now looking to Vancity for possible creative methods of financing the project to make it more feasible. But, as one member commented on the whole process, "Green housing shouldn't be this complicated!"

While the common impression is that solar is desirable, this process brought up lots of other questions about sustainability. It has raised our awareness about building factors such as heat retention, insulation and ventilation, and these discussions are continuing.

We don't yet know whether or when we'll install solar hot water heating. But, at least we are now dealing in real figures for costs, energy savings and return on investment. Using a triple bottom line doesn't have to mean squandering valuable co-op assets.

 To see View Court's eco-sustainability policy, visit <http://viewcourt.vcn.bc.ca/eco-sustainability>.



Members of View Court's green committee pose as solar panels on the co-op roof.



Members of HW Flesher cleaned up their neighbourhood as part of Keep Vancouver Spectacular.

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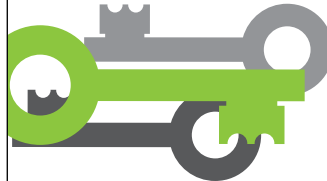
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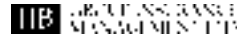
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Here, courtesy of CHF Canada, are ten things you and your co-op can do to go green.

Top 10 sustainability action list

1

Value co-op housing's social sustainability

Your co-op provides an affordable housing solution and helps your members meet their needs.

- Go beyond your co-op and support initiatives in your community that help people meet their basic needs.
- Advocate for affordable and healthy housing that helps to build security and well-being.

2

Encourage co-op participation in community building efforts

- Community can forge a sense of belonging and identity for your members.
- Community building can involve activities in your co-op or in the community beyond your co-op.

3

Reduce your energy use impact

- An energy audit will help your members set priorities to replace inefficient lighting, appliances, windows, improve ventilation, upgrade insulation, improve boilers and furnaces, toilets, showerheads and faucets.
- Find out about sources of alternative energy in your area such as wind, solar or geothermal power, which may allow your co-op to switch completely from fossil-fuel energy use.
- Investigate what energy-efficiency incentives or grants might be available for your members, and/or consider creating internal incentives to encourage and reward energy efficiency in your membership.

4

Buy local

- Revise your purchasing policies to ensure that you purchase locally produced, recyclable, energy-efficient, long-life and non-toxic products wherever possible.
- Explore local food sources and make this information available to your members and encourage them to use these products.
- Consider joining local food-buying clubs and community food kitchens.

5

Reuse

Find ways to maintain and extend the use of co-op equipment and encourage members to reuse with free stores, member swaps and other initiatives.

6

Recycle

- Join community recycling programs or start your own.
- Compost your organic waste either with a co-op compost or individual unit worm composters.
- Use mature compost for co-op gardens, or donate it to community gardens.
- Look into how your co-op can recycle electronic equipment.

7

Reduce the use of toxic products

This includes any product with an impact on the natural environment and human health, e.g., things that give off gas, solvents, toxic paints, pesticides, and herbicides.

8

Encourage energy-efficient transportation

- Members can find ways to decrease vehicle use, get involved in co-operative car sharing, bicycle sharing, trip reduction planning.
- Your co-op can look for ways to provide incentives, e.g., reduced fees on transit passes, membership discounts in car sharing, or even car-pooling within your co-op.

9

Develop water conservation efforts

- In addition to installing water conservation toilets and water-efficient fixtures, your co-op could use rainwater capture, with rain barrels and rain gardens.
- Other options to reduce water use are use of a grey water recycling system, drought resistant landscaping with native plants, and removing impervious surfaces in gardens.

10

Develop and maintain your co-op's green space

- If your co-op doesn't have much green space, look for ways you could increase natural habitat.
- If your co-op already has a green space, consider adding more oxygen-rich native plants and trees to help preserve the natural benefits of cleaner air, wildlife habitat and recreation and relaxation for your co-op members.
- Also consider gardening for food security by joining community gardening groups, composting, and permaculture gardening.

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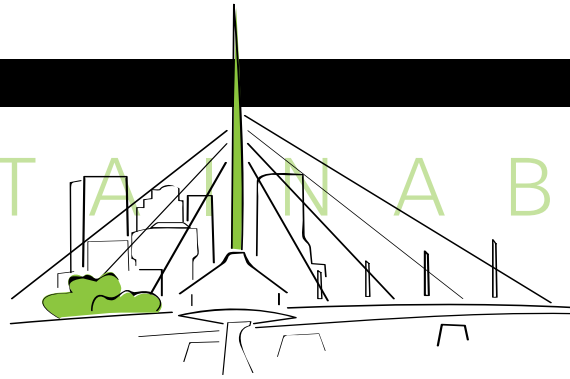
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CHF Canada AGM goes green

The theme was environmental sustainability at CHF Canada's 2007 annual meeting in Winnipeg, thanks to a resolution from Toronto's Hugh Garner Housing Co-op at last year's meeting to show that housing co-ops are "environmentally active, environmentally aware."

Members talked about what housing co-ops across the country are doing to reduce their environmental impact. And they looked at how co-ops can make changes to conserve energy, save money and make their co-ops environmentally sustainable.

Members heard from keynote speaker, Kelly Baxter, executive director of the Natural Step Canada. She shared her experiences transforming communities with The Natural Step Framework, a system designed to analyze a group's sustainability – a household,

a community, a city – and then determine what steps need to be taken to improve.

"I can talk to you about the economic and business reasons for paying attention to our environment – and there are lots," Baxter told participants at the annual meeting. "But let me just ask... how many of you have children? How many of you have grandchildren?"

"I think that's one big reason that we're having this conversation today. We're talking about their future – their world, their air, their water, their health, their climate. We'd all do anything for our children. There's nothing more important. So collectively, why wouldn't we want to safeguard their future, to make sure that they have access to the same quality of life that we do?"

Baxter congratulated housing co-ops for deciding to be part of the solution.

During the national business meeting, members had an opportunity to take part in a group brainstorming session. They shared solutions and made decisions about what the next steps might be for co-ops to overcome obstacles to sustainability. A report on these discussions will be available soon.

Also, a series of workshops focused on the sustainability theme and showcased what housing co-ops are already doing.

There's more to come. Members passed a resolution from Toronto's Arcadia Housing Co-op asking CHF Canada to develop guidelines to help housing co-ops develop their own plans for environmental sustainability.

The sustainability plans fit in well with CHF Canada's 2020 Vision and use of the 2020 Compass, a tool presented at the AGM and designed to help the many co-ops who are now looking at the future beyond the end of their operating agreements.

CHF Canada's 2008 annual meeting will be in Toronto, June 12- 14. ■



For more information, visit CHF Canada's website at www.chfcanada.coop.



25th Anniversary congratulations from Rooftops Canada

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Rooftops Canada, I wish to congratulate CHF BC on the occasion of your 25th anniversary, and thank you for the very important contribution CHF BC has made to international co-operation through your support.

Over the years, many of our overseas visitors to Canada have been hosted by CHF BC and its members, giving our guests the opportunity to learn more about housing co-ops and sector management. CHF BC members generously support our work and continue to help us make a difference. Your assistance has helped many people in developing countries secure affordable housing.

We offer our heartfelt congratulations for your outstanding successes – past, present and future. We look forward to continuing to work together in the future. Happy 25th Anniversary!

Barry Pinsky,
Executive Director, Rooftops Canada

From debris to development

Rooftops Canada is supporting an unusual project in Mumbai, India set up by its longtime partner, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) and the City Industrial Development Corporation. The YUVA Building Centre recycles construction waste – reclaiming what was seemingly useless debris in a cost-effective and sustainable program.

Mumbai generates about 7000 tonnes of solid waste every day, and about 2000 tonnes of that is construction debris. It is often dumped into sewers or beside rivers, blocking drains and damaging water systems. Flash floods in July 2005, which took over a week to drain, demonstrated the seriousness of the problem and the huge need to better manage the waste.

The centre picks up construction waste – including brick, mortar, masonry and ceramic tiles – for a small fee. The debris is sorted, then pulverized and converted into new paving stones, bricks and

mortar. For almost five years, the centre has been successfully recycling debris from construction sites and building demolitions and renovations. In addition to recycling old debris, the centre has also created new jobs.

The YUVA Building Centre showcases its products and provides a model and training for others who would like to establish similar recycling plants. Centre staff have demonstrated their recycling technology to Indian, Sri Lankan and Indonesian architects dealing with the debris caused by the 2004 tsunami. They also work to build local environmental awareness. As Bejoy Davis, the centre's project manager, says, "Construction waste is the responsibility of not merely the builder, developer or debris operator, but of each and every resident in the city who is constructing, renovating or demolishing their place." ■



For more information, contact
Rooftops Canada at www.rooftops.ca.



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◀ p. 12

Accessibility at Camp YES

want camp to reflect the real world, where people live with disabilities.

So how do we make camp a place that can include youth with disabilities? We ask them! YIY has two youth inclusion consultants. These are two young people with disabilities who are helping to evaluate how inclusive camp is and how it can be better. The process has already started. The first official activity of this project was going to our site at Cowichan Lake. Our inclusion consultants looked at barriers to inclusion that the site might pose, such as narrow doors and uneven pavement. We also looked at the positives such as wheelchair accessible bathrooms, and cabins.

The project is still in its beginning stages, but we're optimistic that camp will be able to include more young people with disabilities in the future and that we will grow richer from meeting them, as we do with every youth who comes through our program. For me inclusion is at the heart of 'free and open membership.' If we believe youth have an important voice we need to make sure we are asking and listening to that voice. Youth are as diverse as people different races, incomes, likes, dislike abilities and disabilities. For YES Camp to be more inclusive we need to ask what we need to do and help and be helped in doing that. Why? That's YIY. ■



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Sustainability Solutions Group member
Jason Found says the workers co-op
structure allows them to do good work for a
wide range of clients.



Co-op model a perfect fit for sustainability

Several years ago, a few idealistic environmentalists met through the Sierra Youth Coalition and decided to start an environmental consulting group. Today, Sustainability Solutions Group Workers' Co-op (SSG) has been up and running for two years, with five full-time staff in Victoria, Montreal and Halifax. They have a raft of successful and promising projects to brag about, including -

- 25 significant green building projects
- the Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework – a measurement and reporting tool used on 25 college and university campuses across Canada
- alternative land tenure models, including community land trusts, to protect farmland
- developing their own carbon offsetting portfolio that results in real emissions reductions through investments in retrofitting rather than strategies that simply uptake more carbon dioxide (like tree planting)

“From the beginning it’s been our aim to set up as a co-operative,” says SSG’s newest director, Jason Found, “because it matches the values of what we’re trying to achieve. We’re focused on doing good work, coming up with innovative solutions for sustainability, and that’s not all found in one sector, obviously. The way we’re structured, we’re able to pick the projects we believe in. Basically, for-profit and government work helps subsidize our non-profit work.”

SSG is a for-profit co-op that uses its profits to benefit other non-profits. SSG devotes 10 percent of its gross revenue to this purpose. Its remaining profits get funnelled into financing other SSG environmental projects that wouldn’t otherwise be able to get off the ground. This and a sliding fee scale enables SSG to cover a wide range of initiatives for a diverse client list of small non-profits, government agencies, institutions and corporations.

“It’s been a good mix of clients,” says Jason, “but sometimes you have to really switch gears going from one to the next.”

It has been working well, with a steady number of members and associates quitting their day jobs to join SSG, often bringing their one slate of new clients along with them.

“Let me put it this way,” Jason laughs, “we definitely don’t have a shortage of work right now.”

With a large network of associates and partners, SSGs collective range of expertise is quite broad. Energy assessments for existing buildings is just one of the things SSG could do with the housing co-op sector. They also do green building consulting, green retrofits, and sustainability studies using a triple bottom line approach. ■



For more information about
Sustainability Solutions Group Workers Co-op,
visit www.sustainabilitysolutions.ca.

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