

The  
**CO-OPERATIVE  
HOUSING  
FEDERATION**  
*of Canada*



# NewsBriefs

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*Cover photo: Co-op members attend an all-candidates meeting at Swansea Village Co-op as part of the provincial election co-op campaign.*

## CYL: 'A life-changing experience'

This summer, CHF Canada's Ontario Region sponsored four co-op housing youths to attend the Co-operative Young Leaders (CYL) program. The sponsorships came out of a resolution approved by delegates at the AGM in St. John's in May, which called on the Ontario Region to sponsor a number of youth to attend CYL each year.

**Kerri Blais** from **Carillon Co-op** in Ottawa wrote to the Ontario Region about her experience. "My week at the Co-operative Young Leaders Camp was life-changing. I made so many new friends, and learned so much," says Kerri.

"I learned about public speaking in front of an audience. We played lots of fun games and did lots of activities.

My favourite was 'ride the pony.' I learned how co-ops function by running the camp snack shack."

"It was a very emotional week for all of us who attended. I truly loved and enjoyed every moment of my time at CYL, and I will cherish the memories forever, as well as use the knowledge of everything I learned to help me be successful in the future."

"Thank you for this life-changing experience. I will never forget it."

Others who attended CYL were **Amber Yetman** from **Frank McLoughlin Co-op** in Brampton, **Mackenzie Charbonneau-Young** from **Eileen Tallman** in Ottawa, and **Shakila Mbuguje** from **Brighton Yards** in Waterloo.

**"Thank you for this life-changing experience. I will never forget it."**

As part of our 2012 AGM in Niagara Falls, we plan to hear from some of this year's CYL participants.

Sending co-op youth to CYL is one way to help develop future co-op leaders. Start thinking now about who your co-op could send to camp in 2012 and watch for information about the Ontario Region's sponsorship program in the New Year.



# Re-election of Liberal government opens door to eviction law reform

In the closest provincial election in years, the Ontario Liberals held on to power, but lost a large number of seats and the majority they enjoyed in their first two terms in government. The final count had the Liberals with 53 seats (one short of the 54 required for a majority), the PCs with 37, and the NDP with 17.

The result opens the door for housing co-ops to hold the Premier to his promise in a pre-election letter to the Ontario Council to “move expeditiously [on eviction law reform] by introducing and passing legislation early in our next mandate.” The NDP, which holds the balance of power, also voiced its support for a new co-op eviction system during the campaign. You can read the Liberal and NDP letters of support by going to the “Provincial Election 2011” page on CHF Canada’s website.

Housing co-operators were very active in the campaign, organizing a number of candidates’ meetings and social gatherings, raising issues with candidates on the doorstep, and attending election events sponsored by other groups.

## The Ontario Region will now make it a priority to ensure that the government keeps its promise to quickly introduce legislation

**Crossroads Co-operative Homes** in North Bay held a “thank you to our members” barbecue during the summer, before the election officially started, which PC candidate Vic Fedeli attended. During the social event, **David Lee**, President of the board, was able to have a lengthy conversation with Mr. Fedeli, who was subsequently elected MPP for the riding of Nipissing.

“We talked about the need for more affordable housing, for sustaining the current crop of housing, and about Bill 198 [eviction law reform],” says Lee. “Mr. Fedeli could not understand how a bill that has the support of so many could not be passed in the final days before the election. He has spoken in favour of the bill and in a follow-up email after his election win reminded me that he will not forget about us and will dive into the bill at his first opportunity.” Lee felt the exchange was very useful and the connection made could prove helpful when working for changes on issues of importance to housing co-ops—especially in a minority government.



*Warsame Raghe, a young co-op resident, asks candidates a question at an election event held at Duncan Mills Labourers Co-op in the Don Valley East riding.*

**Harvey Cooper**, the Ontario Region’s Manager of Government Relations, admits that it was difficult to get housing issues onto the agenda of the political parties or picked up by the media as the campaign was dominated by pocketbook issues.

The only party to make concrete commitments on affordable housing during the election was the NDP, which promised a 10-year housing plan to build 50,000 new affordable housing units, including 14,000 units over the next four years. The Conservative party platform made no reference to affordable housing, while the Liberals promised only to consider introducing a housing benefit and to work with others to identify ways to develop affordable housing.

The Ontario Region will now make it a priority to ensure that the government keeps its promise to quickly introduce legislation to move co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Ontario Council President, Barb Millsap, says that “It will be up to us to keep the pressure on to make sure that eviction law reform doesn’t again get squeezed out by higher profile government priorities.”

*continued on page 7*

# Time to put the AODA into action

## January 1, 2012 deadline for Ontario co-ops

By Joy Connelly

Ready to meet the January 1, 2012 deadline? That's the date all Ontario co-ops with one or more employees must comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act's* Customer Service Standards. See the sidebar, *AODA Customer Service Standards* for details on the requirements.

If you haven't got started yet, you might discover the process is more enjoyable than you think.



Take **OWN Co-op** in Toronto, for example. Their board approved its Accessible Customer Service Policy in September. The process was "quite refreshing," says **Esther Forde**, OWN Co-op's Housing Manager. She says that the board realized the co-op already met most of the requirements but had never written them into a policy.

That doesn't mean there weren't challenges. For example, OWN Co-op is still considering how to create the required feedback process for new applicants, and the best way to confirm contractors, many of whom have a long-standing relationship with the co-op, meet their training obligations.

OWN Co-op has found meeting its own training obligations more straightforward. Forde met the Customer Service Standard's training requirements through a free online course. "It's such a simple process—something you could do in a lunchtime," says Forde. The training will be rolled into the annual board orientation.

### "DON'T GET SCARED OFF"

For **Shamrock Co-op** in Waterloo, accessibility was built right into the co-op's mandate. Of the co-op's 90 apartment and townhouse units, 19 are fully accessible, with 13 households receiving support services through the on-site Independent Living Centre. The office, common spaces, and playground are all fully accessible.

Their advice to co-ops who are just starting to think about accessibility?

"Don't get scared off. Don't think it's more than it is," says Board President **Sharron Garrah**. "The important thing is simply to recognize a person with a disability is a person first."

Garrah notes co-ops "don't need to stumble around. There are agencies that are very well versed in the AODA who are happy to help you. The main thing is to take time to understand. This is a positive thing that benefits many people."

"Communication is the big one," adds Board member **Larry Boshart**. "If people have trouble communicating, there needs to be extra time and understanding. But once things are understood, things can be done."

### NEED HELP?

CHF Canada's online Resource Centre has everything you need to meet the Customer Service Standard. Check the Resource Centre's Diversity Section for

- a sample Accessible Customer Service Policy
- links to free online training
- checklists
- sample forms, including a form for contractors
- "Accessible Customer Service"—a 90-page guide adapted for co-ops

You can find the Resource Centre at [www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/resourcecentre.asp](http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/resourcecentre.asp).

*Joy Connelly has worked in co-op and non-profit housing for 30 years. She has been the lead consultant to CHF Canada in the development of AODA resources for housing co-ops.*

## AODA Customer Service Standards



By January 1, 2012, all housing co-ops with one or more employees must

- **Train staff and members** who develop policy or deal with members or the public. Keep records. Plan how to train new staff, members, or volunteers.
- **Ensure co-op policies** meet the standards, including specific policies on
  - use of assistive devices
  - service animals
  - support persons
  - temporary service disruptions
  - feedback processes

## Housing co-operators honoured with awards

Co-op housing had a front-row seat at the Ontario Co-operative Association's (On Co-op) Spirit Recognition Awards Gala at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington on October 19. One housing co-op and two co-op activists were honoured by On Co-op, which hands out the awards each year during Co-op Week to recognize significant contributions to the Ontario co-op movement.

**Science '44 Co-op**, a student housing co-op in Kingston, won the Co-operative Social Responsibility award for its numerous environmental initiatives. Starting small about 10 years ago, the co-op decided to replace the bulbs in the fire exit signs in their 21 houses with more efficient bulbs. Instead of pocketing the savings from this project, they

**“Penny’s passion, vision and wonderful sense of humour have benefited and touched a whole new generation of co-op members.”**

ploughed the money into more retrofit projects, resulting in big savings. The numerous retrofits since then, paired with member awareness campaigns, have reduced the co-op's energy consumption by about 110,000 kWh, water consumption by 4,000 cubic metres, and oil consumption by about 37,000 L annually.

CHF Canada recognized Science '44's work on sustainability at the 2011 AGM in St. John's by awarding the co-op the Jim MacDonald Award for Social Change.

“Science '44 has always set the sustainability bar very high and has been a constant inspiration to the rest of us,” says **Tom Klein Beernink**, Manager of Housing and Member Relations at **Guelph Campus Co-operative**.

**Céline Carrière** received the Co-operative Youth Leader award. Céline has been a long-time contributor to Ontario's Co-operative Young Leaders program and a workshop leader for the **Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario**. She is also the manager of **Coopérative d'habitation Lafontaine** through her employment at L. Simpson Management Services Inc., and a director of **Rooftops Canada**.

“Céline's passion for co-ops is in her blood,” says Jeff McCallum of North Wellington Co-operative Services Inc., who has served as a CYL facilitator with her. He adds that he has met very few people with as much energy for co-ops as Céline.



*Top: Science '44 General Manager, Brent Bellamy and President Musonda Yamfwa accept their award from Lisa Guglietti of The Co-operators. Above: Celebrating Céline Carrière's award were her sister, Sonja, and her mother, Jane Schoones.*

When **Penny Bethke** passed away earlier this year, the co-op movement lost a long-time activist, leader, and mentor to many. She was honoured with a special award for a Lifetime of Achievement. Penny began her involvement in the co-op movement as a student when she moved into **Campus Co-op Residence** in Toronto. Over the course of about 15 years she helped develop thousands of co-op homes during the heyday of affordable housing development. She also served as a President of the Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario, the predecessor to CHF Canada's Ontario Region, and in recent years she returned to Campus Co-op as their General Manager.

**Tom Clement**, executive director of the **Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto**, notes that “Penny's passion, vision and wonderful sense of humour have benefited and touched a whole new generation of co-op members.”

# SHRA, 2000–2011, RIP

## HOUSING SERVICES ACT COMES IN JANUARY 1

**“We want our co-ops back: Fix the SHRA.”**

**“Upload co-op housing.”**

From the time the *Social Housing Reform Act* was passed in 2000, municipally regulated housing co-ops have fought to win improvements to it—or better still, to get out from under legislation that they felt stripped away member control of their housing.

Along the way, co-ops have won some helpful changes to program rules, including a new funding model that made a big difference, but the government didn’t agree to a major overhaul of the SHRA until it introduced its Affordable Housing Strategy in 2010. A cornerstone of the Strategy was a new *Housing Services Act* (HSA) to replace the SHRA. The HSA comes into force on January 1, 2012.

The co-op campaigns over the years built awareness of the need for SHRA reform, but when the government finally turned its attention to drafting new legislation, its main concern was to give municipalities, not co-ops and non-profits, more flexibility and control. “There is no question we were swimming against the tide in trying to win more community control under the Act,” says **Dale Reagan**, Managing Director of CHF Canada’s Ontario Region. “When we saw Bill 140, we knew that we would have to work flat out to convince the government to amend it to add more protections for co-ops.”

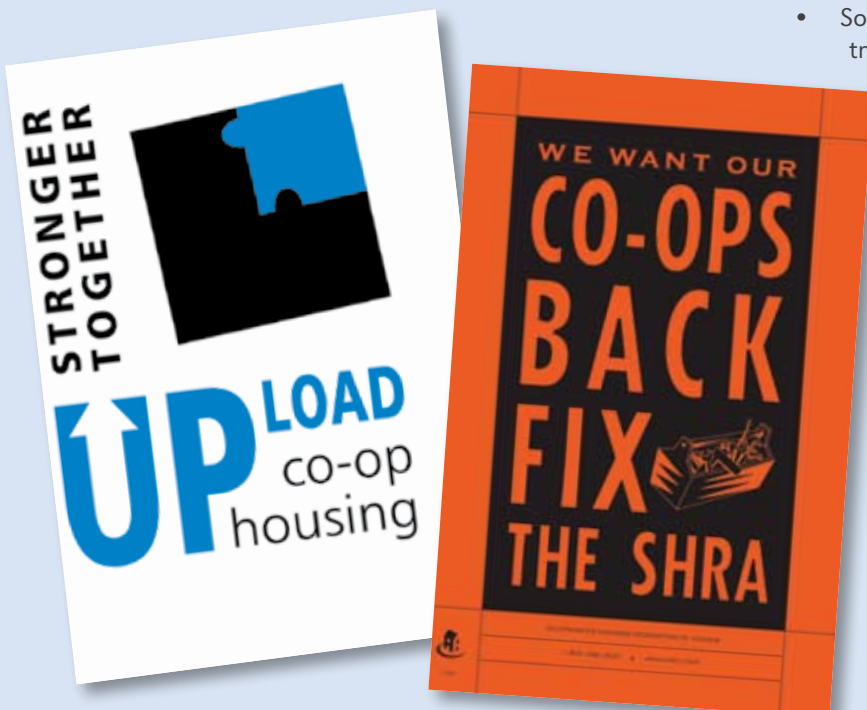
The Ontario Region submitted detailed briefs outlining concerns and changes to the Bill that co-ops were looking for. Six co-op housing groups joined the Region in making deputations to the legislative committee holding hearings on the Bill. In the end several sections of the Bill were rewritten before the legislation was passed, with many of the changes meant to address co-op concerns.

“It will be up to co-ops to assess, over time, whether the *Housing Services Act* is an improvement on the SHRA,” says Reagan. “There are wins and losses in the new legislation. Increased municipal flexibility is a concern. But on balance I think the HSA will provide a better, more protective operating framework for co-ops. In particular, there are more protections for co-ops that get into difficulty and obligations on service managers to make reasonable efforts to assist them before imposing remedies.”

In spite of coming under new legislation, SHRA co-ops shouldn’t expect to see much of a change in their day-to-day operations on January 1:

- Most of the basic rules about how the program works (for example, the funding model, the number of RGI units and RGI eligibility rules) will remain the same.
- Some changes will happen only if and when a service manager chooses to use its increased flexibility to set or amend local rules.
- Some new requirements, such as mandatory provider training and succession plans, will take time for service managers to act on.
  - Some planned changes, such as streamlined RGI administration, are still being worked on.
  - And one of the biggest areas of change—how projects in difficulty are dealt with—though important, won’t affect most co-ops.

Ontario Region staff are working on a detailed overview of how the new HSA rules will affect municipally regulated co-ops and what they will need to do to prepare for the new legislation. We will send this out in the next few weeks. We are also developing management tools that co-ops will need, such as by-law amendments, and starting to deliver training on the HSA. Watch the Resource Centre on our website for the latest resources and training opportunities.



# Carpenters Local 27 Co-op facing a sunny future

By Eliza Moore

"It's exciting to see revenue coming in with no real effort," says **Carpenters Local 27 Co-op** President **Tanya Fletcher**, noting the reaction of board members when they saw a credit of \$1,333 in a recent "bill" from Newmarket Hydro. The credit was for electricity generated by the co-op's solar panels.

In 2009, the *Green Energy Act* set up a program called MicroFIT for small electricity-generating projects to sell power back into the provincial grid. Taking advantage of that program and a grant from the Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program to purchase equipment, Carpenters Local 27 installed a 10 kW solar photovoltaic system on its roof. The co-op has a 20-year agreement with Newmarket Hydro to buy the electricity for a price of 80.2 cents per kW hour, much higher than the current cost of electricity.

Fletcher is also one of GLOBE's community champions. That means that she receives training and support from GLOBE (Green Light on a Better Environment) to assist the co-op and its members in conserving energy and making positive changes in their environment.

She says she has also done a lot to reduce energy consumption in her own apartment, especially at peak use times. She believes it's especially important to do conservation education with children, to reinforce what they learn at school. "It's one thing to include conservation as part of the curriculum, but quite another to get kids to practise what they've learned at home."

"We understand that Carpenters is the first co-op in the province to start generating electricity under the MicroFIT program, so congratulations to them, and may they have a very sunny future!" says Ontario Council President **Barb Millsap**.

*Eliza Moore has had a long-time career in co-op housing and provides consulting services to CHF Canada and Rooftops Canada.*



*John Wilkinson, Tammy Lemieux,  
Tanya Fletcher, Marg Bevan, Tom Austin*

## **Election** continued from page 3

A very positive recent development for co-op housing was the Premier's appointment of Kathleen Wynne as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "She has been a long-time supporter of co-op housing and actively worked to move eviction law reform forward," says Harvey Cooper. "We very much look forward to working with her in this new role."

The election saw a number of new MPPs elected with almost a third of the legislature represented by first-time members. Cooper says that "A second, early priority will be to build on the successful work by co-ops during the campaign and begin to familiarize these new members with the benefits of co-op housing and the issues that are important to us. To do this, we'll work closely with co-ops at the constituency level."

## resource ROUNDUP

CHF Canada regularly develops new resource materials to help co-ops with management and governance. Here is a list of the most recent resources produced by CHF Canada and posted in the Resource Centre on our website.

Resource	Description	Location in Resource Centre
"Managing capital projects"	A sample contract and RFP template to help co-ops with consulting and contract administration services for remedial repairs/restoration	Managing your co-op/ Keeping the co-op in good repair
"You, your staff and the law—Ontario"	A CHF Canada guide to Ontario employment laws. Updated in 2011	Managing your co-op/ The manager's job
"AODA training resources"	A series of educational and training resources on the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i>	Diversity
"Your future starts now: Co-op housing at the crossroads"	A short, inspirational video that shows in strong but simple terms what could happen to our co-op homes and the co-op housing movement if we don't act now to protect them, and the wonderful outcome that is possible if we do	2020 Vision
AGM workshop slides	Workshop handouts from CHF Canada's 2011 Member Education Forum and Co-op Management Conference	AGM workshop materials
<i>Board Basics</i> online 	Learn what makes a good board and a good director when it suits your schedule	Online learning on the CHF Canada home page

To stay up to date on the latest training opportunities for members and staff, check out the Training section of the Resource Centre.

### PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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