



Making the most of your housing co-op's elections

A guide for Ontario housing co-ops

Elections are a key feature of housing co-op governance. Democratically electing a board of directors to assist the membership in governance makes co-ops different than other types of housing. Recent changes to the Ontario Co-operative Corporations Act have changed the way elections must be conducted.

Making the most of your housing co-op's elections is an educational series to help your co-op have the strongest and well-planned elections possible. Each issue in the series is designed as a stand-alone resource that covers a specific part of the election process.

This third issue talks about why election committees are important, their role and how to set it up.

Issue #3: Election committees and the importance of planning



Members need to be informed in order to vote and use their democratic voice. If you want members to be engaged, they need to understand the election process. How do you make the most of your elections and elect a board that gets the job done?

You need directors who take the role seriously and complete their terms, and that doesn't happen on its own. Strong elections require organization and year-round planning.

One effective way to support this is by setting up an election committee. An election committee can:

- plan the election
- find good candidates and ensure they are qualified to run
- explain the election to members
- oversee the election and make sure it is fair, legal and transparent.

An election committee that takes these steps gives the co-op a better chance of election a strong, effective board. Your co-op is more likely to elect a good board when:

- more members run than there are vacant spots on the Board, meaning the election is determined by a vote and not acclamation
- a large number of members turn out to vote
- members know the candidates and understand the issues facing the co-op
- the election is run legally and fairly using a transparent process that everyone understands. No one should be able to dispute the results or the process.

The election committee's job

Article 8.1 of CHF Canada's model Organizational By-law outlines the role of the election committee. The board is responsible for appointing the committee, which can include non-members. Staff can provide administrative support to the committee, but should not be members of the committee themselves or actively looking for candidates. The committee should not include anyone who plans to run in the election or who has a family member who plans to run. If the board does not appoint a committee, then the board is responsible for carrying out these duties.

The committee needs to:

- provide information about the election to members
- educate members on the duties and responsibilities of the board
- find and encourage candidates
- discuss any qualification issues with candidates
- set a deadline for nominations and set voting dates and times
- make sure the election follows the rules stated in the Co-op Act and the by-laws
- arrange for ballots to be given to members, or give out credentials for electronic voting if members can vote electronically
- maintain voters' lists and make sure they are updated after each advance vote
- act as returning elections officers (or arrange for returning officers). The returning officer controls the ballot boxes and ensures the confidentiality of marked ballots.

Successful elections can lead to:

- A board that “works”
- Directors who complete their terms and take their role seriously
- Good member services

Attached to this tip sheet is a checklist for election committees. Your committee should review it and use it to make sure all the steps in your co-op’s election are looked after.

Election committee checklist

This checklist can be used by housing co-op election committees to help them organize their work and make sure all the steps in an election are taken care of. For more information and resources on co-op elections, check out the CHF Canada resource ***Making the most of your housing co-op’s elections***. It is available on the Resource Centre on CHF Canada’s website.

- Encourage members to run for the Board
- Provide education (through materials, sending to sector workshops and so on) to potential candidates on the role of a director in a housing co-op.
- Find out the date of the election meeting (often the AGM) from the Board of Directors
- Review election procedures in your co-op’s by-laws and update this tip sheet with any steps from your by-laws
- Set nomination deadline (at least six days before the election meeting)
- Prepare nomination forms and Election Procedures for Members and distribute to the co-op’s membership
- Decide how members can vote in advance
- Set date for Candidates Meet and Greet (talk to the declared candidates and try to pick a date when the most of them can attend)
- Organize the Candidates Meet and Greet including refreshments
- Prepare election newsletter (ask candidates to submit a short bio that can be published to help members get to know who they are)
- Prepare Ballots
- Prepare materials for advance voting including instructions and a list of candidates. Organize the location for the advance voting.
- If the election meeting is a hybrid meeting where members can attend online, determine how they can vote and give instructions for any electronic voting platform that is used.
- Prepare a flip chart/Powerpoint list of all the declared candidates

- Prepare a flip chart/Powerpoint outlining the instructions for voting (i.e. the number of votes that must be included on each ballot for it to be counted and any other logistical directions you want to give the Members to keep the process easy)
- Obtain a complete list of all Members of the co-op who would be eligible to vote at the election
- Prepare Tally Sheets for counting the votes
- Ensure a Ballot Box is ready for the Election
- Ensure you have a large envelope to seal the ballots and tally sheets inside after the election results are announced.

CHF Canada, Ontario Region Office: 720 Spadina Avenue, Suite 313, Toronto ON, Canada M5S 2T9
Phone: 416-366-1711 | Toll-Free: 1-800-268-2537 | info@chfcanada.coop

[@chfcanada](#)      www.chfcanada.coop