



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 fifth issue talks about helping members figure out who to vote for. They do this by getting to know the candidates. Your election committee has done lots of work to get a full slate of candidates. Now you want the members to get to know them.

Issue #5: Hello. My name is ____ I'd like to be a director

During elections for federal, provincial and municipal governments, candidates run full campaigns to present their ideas and qualifications for the role. In co-op elections, we don't need the formalities of a traditional campaign or any negative communication between candidates, but it's still important to get to know the people who want to lead.

Members need to be able to get to know the people who are ready to lead the co-op. Why would they be a good director? Do they have particular skills or knowledge that would benefit the board? Do they have the time available that being on the board requires? What issues would they give priority to? Do they have the best interests of the co-op at heart?

Some good ways to help your members learn about the candidates are:

- Candidate profiles distributed to the membership
- A "meet-the-candidates" social event

Attached to this tip sheet is a sample candidate's profile. You can ask candidates to fill out the profile and then distribute all the profiles to members. In this way, members can review the information on all the candidates to help them decide who to vote for. Members can also review it before a meet-the-candidates event to learn who is running and decide who they might like to speak to at the event.

As part of a meet-the-candidates event, you can include:

- a way to identify candidates such as a distinctive name badge
- refreshments
- introductions to the candidates early in the event. Some co-ops give candidates an opportunity to introduce themselves and say a bit about why they are interested in being on the board. If you do this, you will want to set a time limit so everyone gets the same amount of time (i.e. two minutes)
- encourage members to mingle and speak to each candidate
- set a friendly and welcoming tone. Electing the board is serious business but it can still be fun for everyone

These are a couple ways for co-op members to get to know who the candidates are. Your co-op may have other ways. The important thing is to give the candidates a non-threatening and friendly way to meet the members and let the members know they are running, introduce themselves and say a few things about their hopes for the co-op.

The next issue of *Making the most of your housing co-op's elections* will look at the procedures of the election and how you can conduct the election and meet the new rules that allow advance voting.

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

Sample Candidates Profile

Please fill out this profile and return it to the co-op office by _____
Please include a photograph. If you need help filling out the profile, please speak to a member of the election committee or to the co-op office.

Your name: _____

1. How long have you been member at _____?

2. Please give examples of your skills (that may include financial, communication, marketing/member outreach etc.), knowledge of the co-op sector, volunteer/professional experience and qualities that would be an asset to the Board of Directors.

3. How have you been involved at the co-op? What have you enjoyed the most about the things you have done in the co-op?

4. How much time a month can you commit to meetings and board related business?

5. What issues do you think the board should focus on over the next year or two.

6. Tell us why the membership should vote for you.

