



Annual Meeting

FREDERICTON

2026

June 11-13

Deep roots.
Renewed growth.

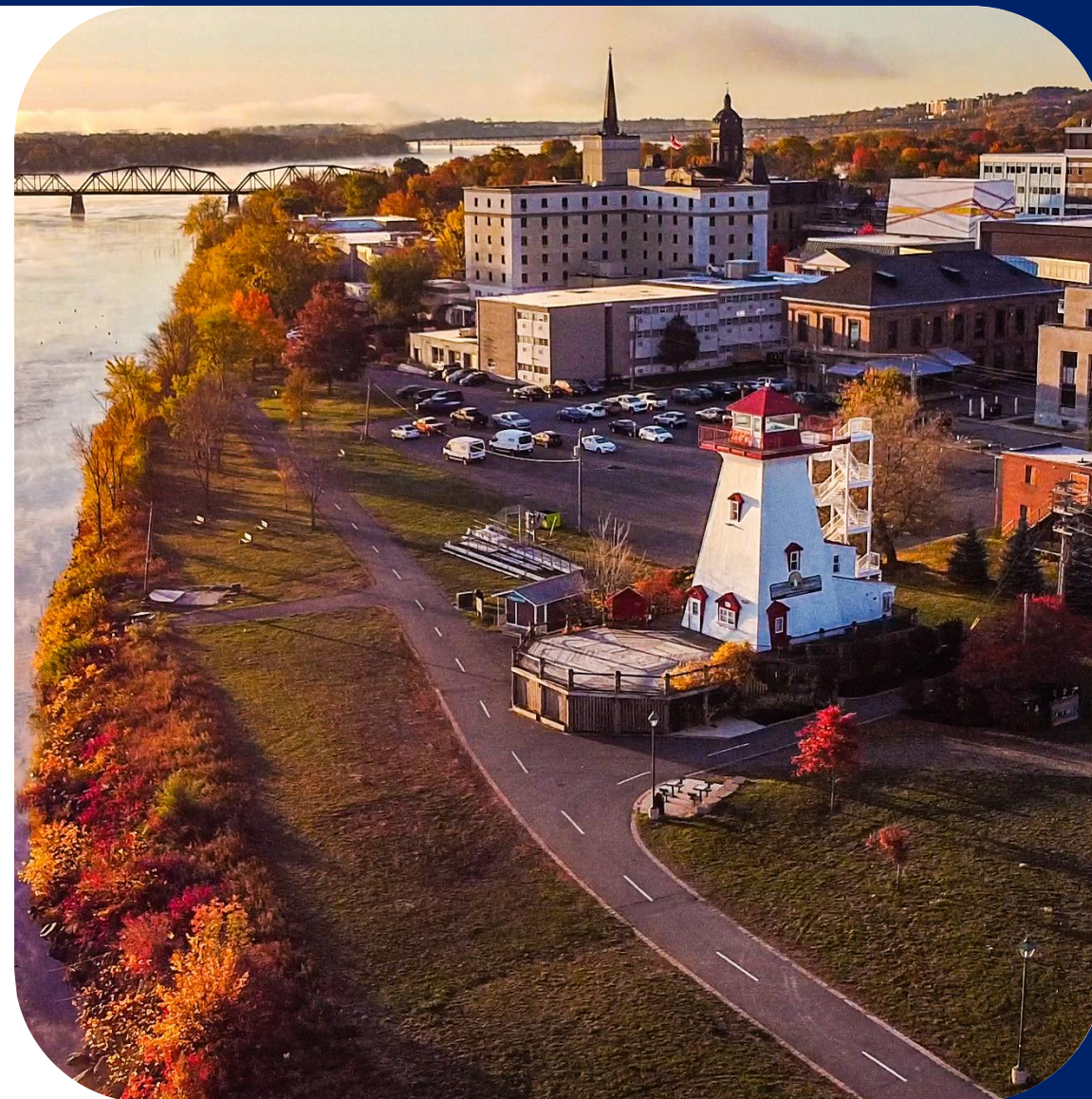


D08 J04 Hello to great elections! Making democracy work at your housing co-op

ONTARIO ONLY – Peter Gesiarz, CHF Canada, ON Region

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that New Brunswick is situated on the unceded and unsundered territories of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaw, and Peskotomuhkati peoples. We seek to repair and rebuild meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and honour these lands which hold the hopes of future generations.



Workshop objectives

By the end of the workshop participants will:

- Understand recent changes to election rules
- Know how board elections work under the law
- Learn your co op's voting options
- Be better prepared to run or take part in elections



Table discussion



What strategies can be used to encourage members to run for the board?

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL



Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors/trustees) are elected among the membership and are accountable to them. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

- Housing co-ops are controlled by their members
- Each member has one vote
- Housing co-ops give members the information they need to make good decisions and take part in the life of the co-op

Co-op governance

Governance is about setting and controlling the overall direction of the co-op, ensuring the co-op is a viable business and community.



Members' responsibilities in governance

A co-op's members make key governance decisions that only the members can make. Members:

- Choose (and remove) the directors
- Approve and amend the co-op's by-laws
- Adopt special resolutions
- Approve the budgets and housing charges
- Appoint the auditor and approve the audit.
- Dissolve the co-op – *exercising careful consideration

Board elections



Purpose of board elections



A resident board of directors elected by the members is the foundation of a co-op and its democratic functioning

The Co-op Corporations Act states:

Election of directors

- **90** (1) The directors shall be elected by the members at a general meeting, and the election shall be conducted in the manner prescribed by section 91. 2023, c. 9, Sched. 8, s. 7.

Co-operative Corporations Act, 2023

- The *Co-op Corporations Act* changed on Oct 1, 2023
- Your co-op needs to be following the legislation; your co-op needs to be compliant
- All co ops must follow the updated law
- This applies even if by laws have not yet been updated



Changes to the Act

- Signatures – electronic
- Notices – electronic
- Meetings & Attendance
- **Advance Voting**
- **Election Procedures**
- Non-electronic changes



Voting process – What the Act says

- **Voting for directors**

- **91** (1) Every member entitled to vote at an election of directors, if the member votes, shall cast at or before a general meeting a number of votes equal to the number of directors to be elected... R.S.O. 1990, c. C.35, s. 91; 2023, c. 9, Sched. 8, s. 8.

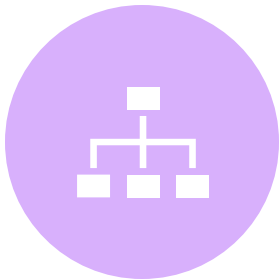
Changes to election procedures



The co-op must have a system in place to allow for advanced voting



Nominations from the floor are no longer accepted



The model Organizational By-law outlines one option for electing directors



The Frequently Asked Questions outlines other possibilities for election procedures

Advanced voting



Advance voting:

- Happens before the election meeting
- Takes place at the office or a set polling location
- Is by secret ballot (paper or electronic)
- Must be kept secure
- Counted at an election meeting

How to proceed with the changes



Elections officer/committee

The Board will appoint an elections officer or committee before any members' meeting where there will be an election

The elections officer/committee should sign a Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Agreement

No member of the elections committee, or relative of a committee member, can run in the election

The elections committee will:



Give info about the election to members



Set a deadline for nominations



Ensure candidates meet the qualifications to run in the election



Get more candidates than the number of directors to be elected



Supervise counting the ballots and announce the results



Provide candidates with education on the role and responsibilities of being a director

Qualifications for candidates

Age and qualification of directors – *Co-operative Corporations Act Age*

- 89 (1) No person under eighteen years of age shall be a director of a co-operative. R.S.O. 1990, c. C.35, s. 89 (1).

Qualifications

- (2) No undischarged bankrupt or person who is incapable of managing property within the meaning of the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 shall be a director, and a director who becomes bankrupt or incapable of managing property ceases to be a director. 2009, c. 33, Sched. 2, s.19 (2).

What makes elections successful?

- Engaged members
- Clear information
- Fair processes
- Open participation



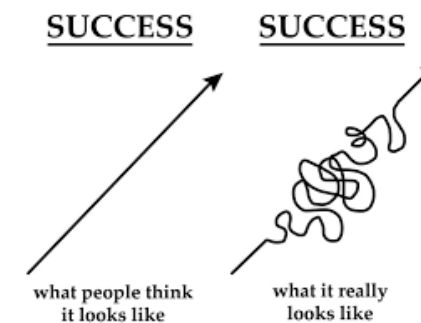
Successful elections:



- More candidates than positions available
- Determined by a vote for candidates and NOT by acclamation
- High turnout in member voting
- Transparent process that is shared with all members

Successful elections lead to:

- A board that collaborates effectively
- Directors who fulfill their terms
- Directors who carry out their responsibilities with diligence and commitment
- Excellence in service to members



Board role in elections



Appoint an elections officer and/or elections committee to promote and prepare for a great election



Ensure the elections officer/committee sign a Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Agreement



Run for re-election



Be a promoter of the board and answer any questions members might have about serving on the board – be positive



Provide candidates with education on the role and responsibilities of being a director

Board role in elections



Recruit candidates and plan for advance nominations



Encourage members to make their own decisions about who to vote for



Be prepared to work with whoever is elected



Encourage all members to be involved – run or nominate

Staff role in elections

Be knowledgeable about by-laws and election process

Ensure election planning is on the agenda for a board meeting well in advance of the election

Learn about virtual and electronic voting technology

Keep track of and report to the board about terms ending and positions to be filled

Prepare election materials; have a copy of the voters list (updated with every advance voting opportunity)

Encourage all members to be involved – run or nominate

Help prepare the meeting chair. Support the Election Committee

Help with meeting logistics & advance voting.

Election planning timeline



- Starts months in advance
- Follows by laws and legislation
- Sets nomination deadlines early
- Allows time for advance voting

Nominations

- Nominations must be submitted in advance
- Forms must be completed and signed
- Deadlines are set by the election committee
- **Floor nominations are not permitted at the election membership meeting***



Qualities:

- Strong ethical values
- Respect for the members
- Respect for the decisions members make
- Ability to keep overall interests of the co-op in mind
- Take seriously their duty for the guidance and well-being of the co-op
- Transparency to keep the members informed about what the Board is doing
- Commitment to the co op and its by-laws



As a candidate:



Join our board!



- Meet members and answer questions
- Share why you want to serve on the board
- Attend education workshops on being a director

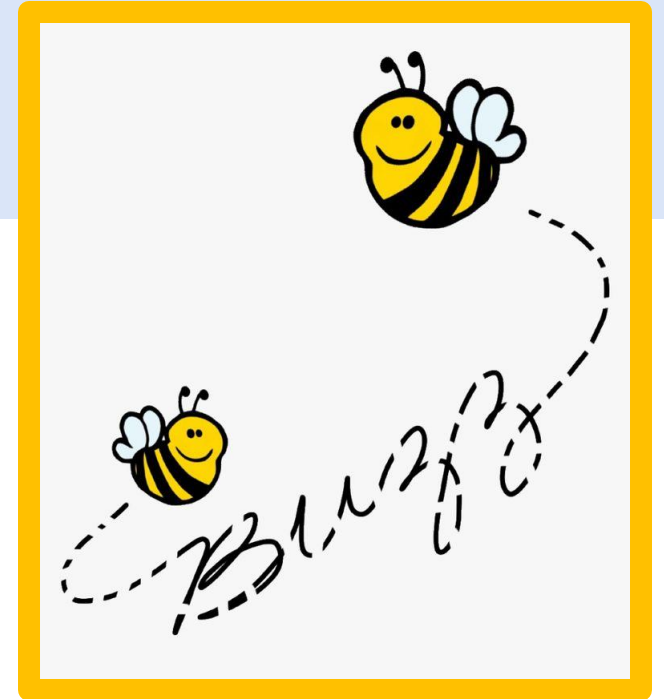
Create an election “Buzz”

- Actively promote the election to ensure member awareness
- Encourage members to participate by self-nominating or nominating another eligible member
- Promote election-related social and engagement events to build interest and understanding of the process



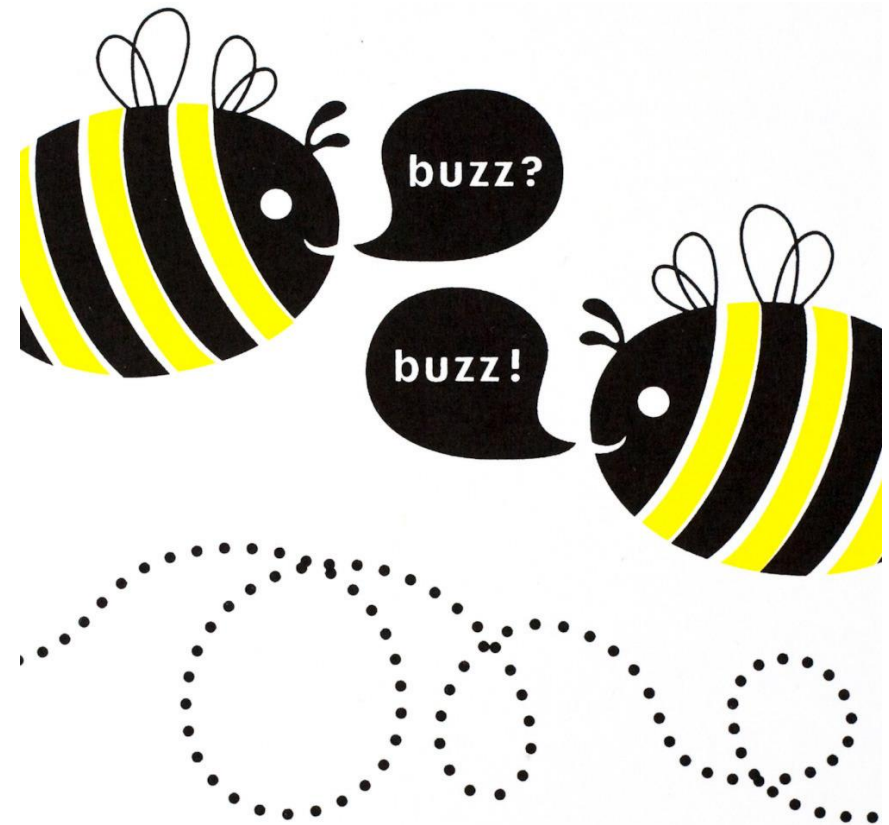
“Buzz”

- Develop and share election promotional materials, including:
 - Candidate bios
 - Posters
 - Electronic bulletin board notices
 - Newsletter articles
 - Election information on the co-op’s website and social media page

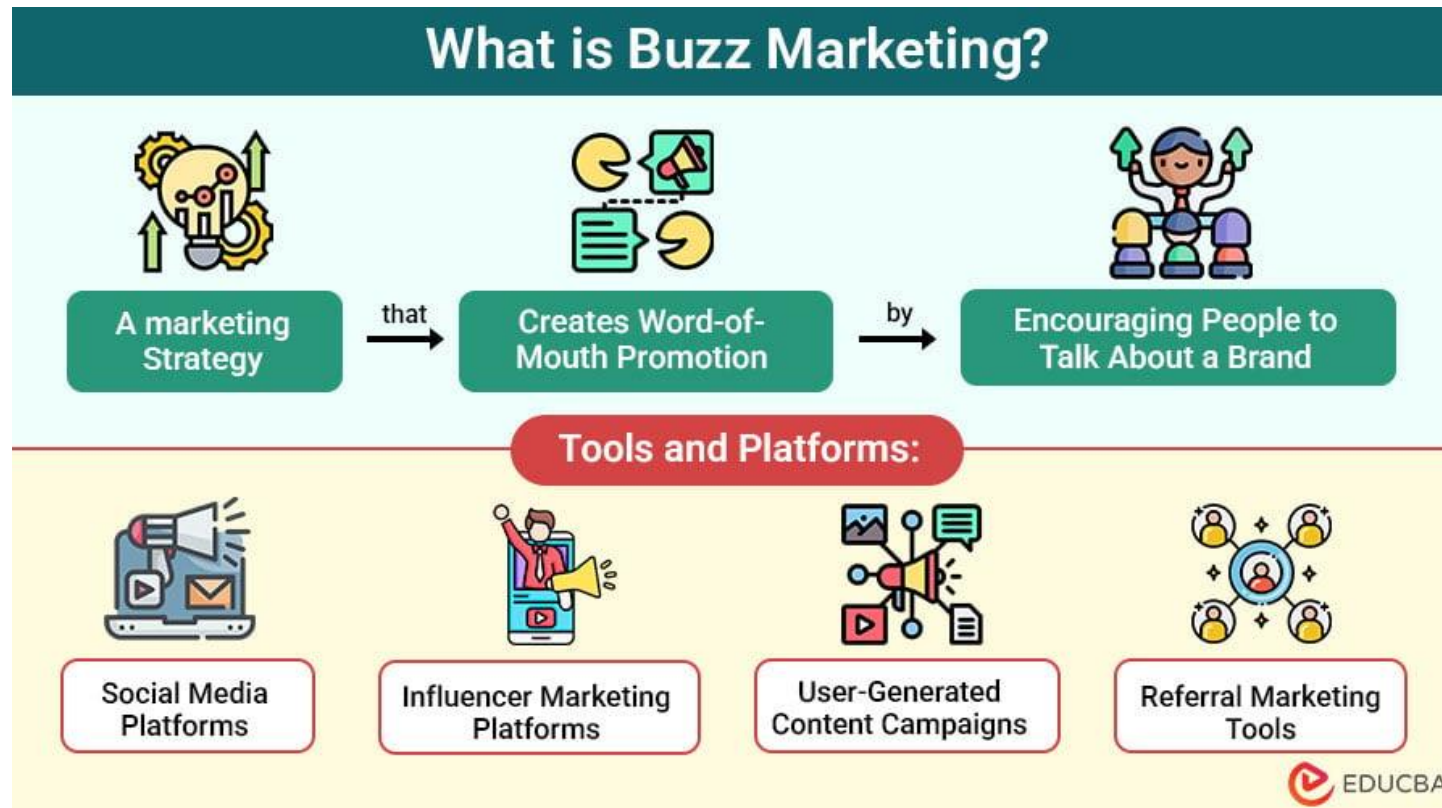


“Buzz”

- Hold an all-candidates meeting
- Reference and uphold co-operative principles and the co-op’s by-laws throughout the election process
- Vote



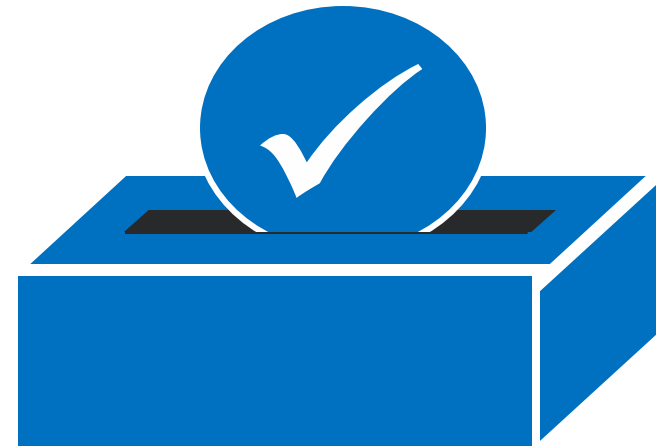
“Buzz”



Voting



- By secret ballot
- Member must vote for only the number of positions to be filled
- Voting takes place before and at the members' meeting
- No proxy voting

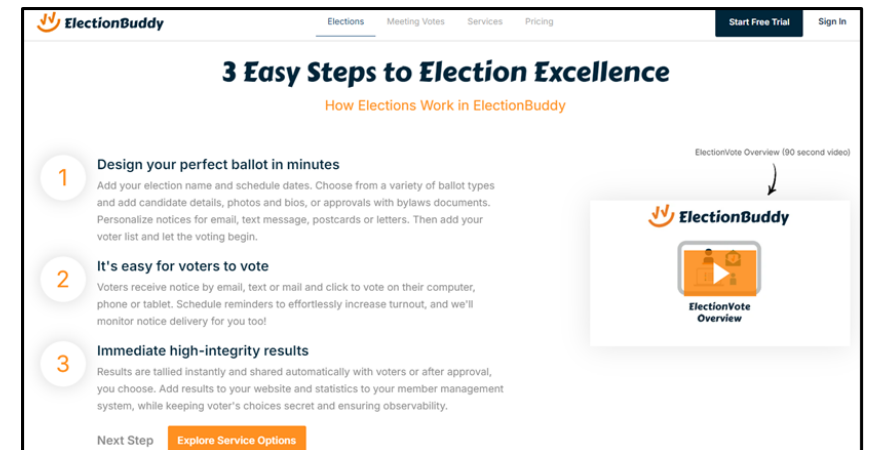
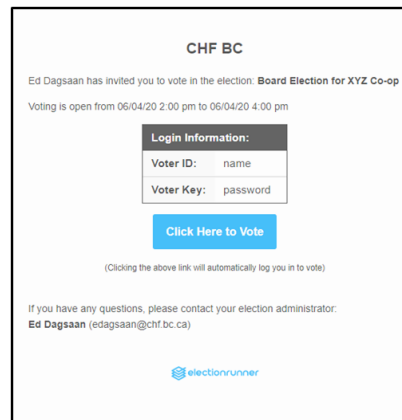


Counting the votes

- Vote counting is supervised
- Results are tabulated and announced at the meeting
- Tie votes are decided by random draw
- Ballots are secured in case of recount

Electronic voting options

- Co-ops may use electronic platforms
- Systems must support advance voting
- Security and privacy are essential



Elections summary

- Co-op's must allow advance voting for election of directors regardless of the version of by-laws they are using
- Election success is a year-round process--organization and planning is integral
- Education, communication and member engagement is crucial to successful elections and good governance
- Members have the most important role in elections: vote

CHF Canada resources

Ontario Election Series (# 1-7)

- <https://chfcanada.coop/resources/board-members/meetings/elections/>
 - *Issue #1: Election overview*
 - *Issue #2: Changes to voting and your election system*
 - *Issue #3: Election committees and the importance of planning*
 - *Issue #4: Getting nominations*
 - *Issue #5: Hello. My name is _____ I'd like to be a director*
 - *Issue #6: Conducting the election*
 - *Issue #7: Housing co-op elections step-by-step*

Questions/discussion



Share what you've learned on social media!

- Post photos, favourite moments, or key learnings from today's workshops on social media
- Tag us @chfcanada
- Use the hashtag #CHFCanada2026



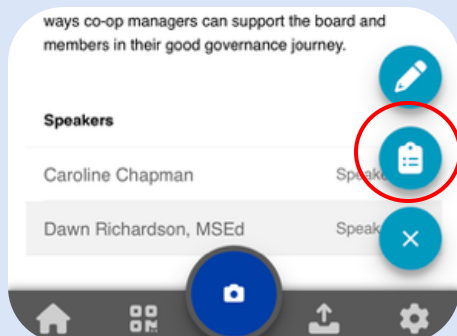


Before you go

We need your help to do better!

Fill out a paper evaluation, fold in half and leave it in the room. Or, fill out a digital evaluation using our conference app.

Thanks!



When you get home

Find today's workshop materials in the resources section of our website:

chfcanada.coop/education

Education Materials

The CHF Canada Resource Centre is open to everyone.

With 200+ resources—including guides, tools, templates, tip sheets, checklists, and model by-laws—you'll find everything you need to strengthen your co-op. Resources are carefully organized by topic and role, making it easy to find exactly what you need, when you need it.

Our resources are developed and regularly updated in collaboration with experts across the housing co-op sector, ensuring you have the latest insights to tackle any challenge.

Start Exploring

Resources ▾ Online Learning ▾ Manager Training ▾ Sharing Circles ▾ Co-op Staff Oasis Net... ▾ Education Events ▾

Reminders

- **Voting in CHF Canada National Business meeting happens on Saturday.** Your co-op's delegate must be there in order to vote. The delegate can pick up a voting device at conference services
- **All coffee breaks will be held in the tradeshow area!** Make sure you visit all the tradeshow exhibitors so that you can complete the bingo card (found in your bag) and have a chance to win prizes.

The National Education Committee presents

ONLINE LEARNING

Self-Paced

Move through the content when it suits you.



Courses

Fulfilling your legal duties as a board director

Taking effective meeting minutes

Chair like a champion

Personal information protection

Identity affirming language

Maintenance 101

Financial statements 101

- ✔ For board directors, co-op members, and staff
- ✔ \$30 per course
- ✔ Many courses to choose from
- ✔ 30 minutes per course
- ✔ Requires internet connection
- ✔ Develop practical skills and gain knowledge

