

by Nicholas Gazzard

Good governance starts with you.
Pin this up on your co-op's bulletin
board to share with members.



Getting our Co-op Principles Right

Good Governance and the International Co-op Principles

CHF Canada is publishing a short guide to the international co-op principles, and what they mean for governance in housing co-ops. It is intended as a companion to *Getting Governance Right*, a CHF Canada 2020 Vision publication on good governance and principled leadership. Both these guides are available in the Resources section of CHF Canada's website at www.chfcanada.coop.

This guide is also a 2020 Vision publication. CHF Canada's 2020 Vision Project is all about strengthening our co-ops and our movement as we prepare for the future. That means getting our management in order, making sure we can look after our properties, planning for our co-op's financial security, and so on. But 2020 Vision is also about affirming our co-op values. And there is no better foundation on which to build those values than the seven principles of international co-operation – principles that carry forward and build on the values of the original pioneers of the international co-op movement.

The Co-op Principles for Housing Co-ops

Here's a quick-reference version of the co-op principles that we've adapted especially for housing co-ops.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Membership in a housing co-op is open to all who can use the co-op's services and accept the responsibilities of being a member, without discrimination.

2. Democratic Control

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.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute financially to the co-op and share in the benefits of membership. The co-op does not pay a return on the members' shares or deposits. Instead it sets aside reserves for the future and charges the members only what it needs to operate soundly.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Housing co-ops are independent associations. They follow the laws that apply to them and their agreements with governments or other organizations. But the members control the co-op.

5. Education, Training and Information

Housing co-ops offer education and training to the members, directors and staff so that everyone can play a full role in the life of the co-op. Housing co-ops find ways to tell the public what they are and what they do.

6. Co-operation among Co-operatives

By organizing together in federations, housing co-ops grow stronger and help to build a healthy co op movement. Where they can, housing co-ops use the services of co-op businesses to meet their needs.

7. Concern for Community

Housing co-ops work to build strong communities inside and outside the co-op. They help to improve the quality of life for others and they take care to protect the environment.