



## *Barb Casey - Keynote*

It was a chance conversation in 1983 that started Barb's 30-year history within the co-operative housing sector. A friend told her about the 'great community' in which he lived. A year later, she became a member of the Manhattan Housing Co-operative Association in downtown Vancouver, BC. She lived there from 1984 to 1998.

Co-op housing changed Barb's life. She became a very active co-op member, serving on the board and various committees, and eventually to volunteer with CHF BC. She participated on the board, as the president of the Federation and as a workshop leader, delivering co-op education provincially and nationally. At the time of the dissolution of the Federal Co-operative Housing Program, Barb participated in rallies, gave speeches and met with local MPs in an effort to save co-op housing.

Barb's co-op volunteer work eventually transformed into a career in housing. In 1994, she earned a Masters in Urban Planning, with a focus on affordable housing. She worked for five years with Innovative Housing Society, a Vancouver-based housing resource group. During those years, she helped develop over 300 units of co-op housing, the largest being a 101 co-op on the old Expo '86 lands in downtown Vancouver. Barb then joined BC Housing, and for five years, she worked in the Community Development branch, supporting the delivery and development of co-op and non-profit housing communities.

In 2003, Barb moved back home to the East Coast, where she joined Phoenix Youth Programs, which supports youth at risk with support services and residential housing. Barb participated in the board of Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) and the board of the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia. Anywhere she could help make housing happen - Barb gave her time and passion.

For 12 years, Barb worked with Nova Scotia co-ops, in collaboration with CHF Canada and Housing Nova Scotia. She supported co-ops in difficulty and newly amalgamated co-ops, helping them achieve financial and governance stability. She also delivered education workshops, mediation services and board planning sessions. At CHF Canada's 2015 AGM, Barb received CMHC's Award for Outstanding Contribution to Co-operative Housing. She described that as a "true honour".

In 2016 Barb moved to Ottawa working as a director at a large health centre. While in Ottawa, she continued to support co-op and affordable housing through workshops and strategic planning. But in 2018, retirement called and Barb moved to Victoria. She soon found herself attending a co-op housing forum with Thom Armstrong, Executive Director of CHF-BC - where the focus was to bring more co-operative housing to Victoria. Not one to sit idle for too long, Barb is also volunteering with a local non-profit, with a goal of developing more housing for people living in the downtown core.