

A word from the president A growing federation

FECHIMM's 2008 annual general assembly has again let us show the dynamism and the seriousness of the cooperatives members of our federation. The quality of the discussions heard at the assembly on April 18 and 19 and the relevance of the proposals submitted by the delegates of all the cooperatives express the will to do something in order to improve the quality of life of the residents of our cooperatives and all the while keeping in mind sustainable development.

The participants' enthusiasm for the networking activity and the diversity of projects that resulted from this activity are a sign of good omen. The will to develop close ties and share experiences and resources to make sure our cooperative projects work well is unquestionable. The Federation got the message and we will support the initiatives resulting from the networking activity as much as our resources allow it.

The place given to FECHIMM within the Quebec Housing Cooperative Movement is however a less than happy news. The CQCH's AGA, which was held on May 16th to May 18th in Sainte-Adèle, did not approve our federation's proposal to maintain its actual number of representatives on the board of directors of the CQCH; we must analyze how this decision will affect us and our position on this issue. To do this, I am convinced that, like our delegates at our 2008 AGA, we will be able to achieve this goal in a very serene and productive atmosphere.

The networking operation was a success

The participants of the networking workshop were very satisfied with the results. Many projects on various aspects of cooperative life were presented at the assembly.

FECHIMM's 25th anniversary Preparations are going well

Register right now !

The party celebrating FECHIMM's 25th anniversary is well under way. The festivities to be held on Saturday, August 30, at the Parc Jean-Drapeau hope to

bring together a lot of cooperatives and partners to celebrate the success of our housing formula.

Starting as a big community gathering on Ste-Hélène's island, the party will go on all day and the singer Jean-François Lessard and the Cuban group called Asere will end the event.

You will find all the information you need to join us at this party along with the program for the day in the invitation you received along with this edition of the FECHIMM Express.

More information on the web
www.fechimm.coop/25

2008 AGA - The time for alliances

Proposals from the board of directors

FECHIMM's place in the Québec movement

The general assembly approved the proposal from the board of directors to maintain the status quo concerning FECHIMM's representation at the Board of directors and at the general assembly of the CQCH. According to the proposal, the calculation of the number of representatives from the federations would still depend on the number of member cooperatives or of housing units in the member cooperatives, while limiting the representation to a maximum of 33% of the total, on the board of directors as well as at the general assembly.

In February, the CQCH's extraordinary general assembly adopted a resolution to revise the structures giving FECHIMM 3 seats on the board of directors while creating two new seats for small federations and non-federated regions. FECHIMM's proposal meant to overthrow this decision which affects the representativeness of the biggest regional federation regrouping close to 48% of the federated cooperatives in the province of Québec.

The proposal was rejected at the AGA of the CQCH

FECHIMM's new proposal, submitted in May to the CQCH's AGA in Ste-Adèle, was defeated by a majority of votes. The votes were even and was finally settled by the casting vote of Yves Delisle, the president of the Confederation.

Proposal to transfer the Québec park of federal co-ops to the Canadian Agency

The assembly has also approved the board of directors' proposal that the member federations ask the CQCH to start campaigning with the appropriate authorities so that the federal park cooperatives in Québec could benefit from the administrative follow-up given to cooperatives in Canada by the Agency for Co-operative Housing.

The Board considers that the Agency offers efficient computerized services based on risks and that its results, always relying on more revealing statistics, give undeniable advantages in the follow-up and advice to cooperatives.

The proposal submitted at the CQCH AGA was returned to the CQCH's board of directors for further consideration, many delegates feeling they did not have enough information on the subject. If need be, the board of directors can form a committee to elaborate the question or to make a decision.

Modifications to the internal by-law

Many proposals to modify the Internal by-laws of the Federation were adopted by the general assembly. Among those changes, there is a precision concerning the fact that two members of a same cooperative cannot have a seat on the board at the same time.

The administrators' rotation method is also better defined. We now specify that five seats are elected for two years in the odd years. Four seats are elected for two years in the even years.

Among the changes adopted in the by-laws is also the possibility for the board of directors to coopt delegates for an oncoming activity with the CQCH, if no other general assembly of FECHIMM is planned in the meantime to fulfill this or these mandates.

Experimental projet for a housing cooperative in Saint-Jérôme

A proposal requesting that CQCH makes the necessary recommendations to the Société de l'habitation du Québec (SHQ) to modify the age criteria in the AccèsLogis Program: Part II for an experimental project in Saint-Jérôme was ratified by the general assembly. The proposal aims to let the housing cooperative develop an intergenerational approach by welcoming low and medium income people, from 55 years of age instead of 75.

Following the general assembly, discussions with the representatives of SHQ led the Movement to drop this proposal. According to the information we obtained, the actual criteria allow such a project.

CQCH's power to do an inspection

FECHIMM's members agreed to give CQCH the power to do an inspection. The proposal, adopted at the AGA, asks the Confédération to elaborate a proposal at the latest for the 2009 annual general assembly, for a clause in its by-laws granting it the power to do an inspection of its member federations. It is specified that the said clause must consider the cases, conditions, and detailed rules for application and who will pay the costs, fees and expenses created by this inspection. A similar by-law project submitted by the Confédération at its May 2008 general assembly was unanimously adopted.

Participation at the 2008 AGA

104 delegates and observers from 69 cooperatives took part in this FECHIMM's 2008 general assembly which was held on last April 18 and 19 at the Collège Maisonneuve. There is a slight drop in the cooperatives' participation compared to 2007.

Proposals from the general assembly

Sharing the information

Delegates at the 2008 AGA approved the proposal from the assembly that a time slot called « Sharing information with members of other cooperatives on common subjects of interest » be allotted on the agenda of FECHIMM's every general assembly.

Electronic communications

The general assembly has adopted a policy encouraging electronic communications in order to reduce paper consumption. The proposal adopted by FECHIMM was also submitted and adopted by the CQCH delegates at their May AGA meeting.

Local and fairtrade purchasing

The general assembly adopted a resolution asking FECHIMM to adopt a local and fairtrade purchasing policy. The proposal would also invite FECHIMM to ask the CQCH to do the same. The proposal relayed to the CQCH's AGA was adopted.

Guide for the participant at the AGA

In order to encourage the participation of young cooperators, the general assembly opted for a proposal asking FECHIMM to produce a guide for the participant which would include all the rules of procedures they must or should know for the assemblies.

List of members

The general assembly approved a proposal asking FECHIMM to hand over annually to its member co-ops, the list of all member co-ops with their postal addresses. This has a double goal, which is to encourage networking and to establish an Interco-op network.

Rejection of a proposal on secularity of civil institutions

The assembly voted against a proposal on secularity of civil institutions in Québec. The proposal wanted the Federation to demand from local elected officials that they speak out on the matter. The majority of the AGA delegates have not deemed it relevant for the Federation to get involved in this debate.

Election of administrators and delegates for COCH's AGA

Election of administrators

Four administrators of the Federation were elected at the 2008 annual general assembly. The election was done according to the new procedure adopted by the general assembly (see Modifications to the internal by-laws). So, among the 4 seats to be filled, one was reserved for a board member of a federated cooperative. Mr. Denis Plante, outgoing administrator from the Val Perché housing cooperative, was reelected.

The other three administrators are newcomers. They were elected among other candidates indistinctly of their role on the board of director of their own cooperative. Were elected: Claudette De Carufel from the Coopérative Le Prolétaire, Sylvain Bélisle from the Coopérative Du Cagelais and Philippe Banville from the Coopérative Les copains d'abord.

Election of CQCH delegates

The general assembly has also elected eight representatives to complete FECHIMM's delegation at the AGA of the Confédération québécoise des coopératives d'habitation (CQCH). The delegates elected at the FECHIMM's AGA join FECHIMM's nine board members who are automatically nominated. Following the voting period, the following candidates were elected:

Marie-Claude Robert, Coop L'Inattendue
Gabriel Talbot, Coop Village Cloverdale
François Guérard, Coop À Tout Hasard
Céline Procacci, Coop L'Esplanade
Thérèse Tremblay, Coop Feu Vert
Albert Pearson, Coop Mon Toit
Kundisa Toto, Coop Main dans la Main
Gaëtanne Carignan, Coop La Petite Côte

Purchasing Groups

A new partnership with the BRICK stores

FECHIMM and the BRICK stores stroke a partnership which will allow federated cooperatives and their members to receive a discount when buying furniture and household appliances. The proposed rebate will be determined according to the total purchase volume by FECHIMM members, in six Brick stores in the Montréal region.

To take advantage of this rebate, the members must call one or the other Brick stores and make an appointment with a sales representative - commercial division. The members of FECHIMM will be able to compare the prices obtained through the FECHIMM/BRICK partnership agreement and the prices offered to other consumers.

For more information, visit www.fechimm.coop/achats.html or get in touch with the commercial sales division at Brick's at 1-866-439-3313.

Meeting with the partners within the context of the 2008 AGA

Faithful to a now well established tradition, FECHIMM took advantage of its 2008 AGA to invite its partners to come and meet the delegates of their member cooperatives. During the lunch hour, a dozen partners installed in the interior garden of the Collège Maisonneuve, presented their products and services and answered questions from the cooperators.

The networking operation was successful

With the theme « It is time for alliances», the 2008 annual general assembly made room for network between cooperatives. Representatives of housing cooperatives, regrouped according to their place of residence, swapped stories on various problems and identified solutions to ensure the success of their collective enterprise.

The attending delegates were satisfied with the work accomplished in the workshops. To make sure that their ideas would spread over the metropolitan Montréal, the delegates were asked to share their findings and projects with the participants of the AGA. Many projects involving various aspects of cooperative life were submitted to the assembly.

The method

After establishing priority issues among a series of interesting subjects, the participants, regrouped according to their geographical district, were divided into subgroups and continued to discuss and work out projects to submit to the boards of directors of the cooperatives.

Geographical district : Ville-Marie borough

Adapted co-ops

The participants in this workshop think that the cooperatives must take advantage of the fact that many of them will have to make important renovations on their buildings in order to include the development of the common spaces and the housing units that will take into account the particular needs of aging tenants. They are looking into the possibility of installing a lift.

At your composter, get set, go !

The importance of protecting the environment and adopting attitudes that go along with sustainable development have also caught the attention of the participants of this workshop. The group gave itself the mission of making the cooperatives in their district aware of the importance of composting and encouraging the implementation of this waste management approach in most of the Ville-Marie borough cooperatives.

Less cars for a better quality of life

Reducing the traffic in the borough also appears to be a priority for the participants in this workshop. According to them, using a car less often means a better quality of life in the Ville-Marie borough.

Geographical district : Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough

Making sure someone can take over

Convinced that new members should know all about life in a housing cooperative, the participants in this workshop believe that communication tools adapted to their clientele should be developed. According to them, a simple informative sheet distributed to the new members along with an information workshop would be a much better tool than a big binder that nobody bothers to read.

List of suppliers

According to the participants of the workshop, everybody would benefit a lot more from a better transfer of information concerning the suppliers of goods and services between the cooperatives of the district. To ensure this exchange of information, these participants agreed to meet on a quarterly basis.

Shared training

With the need to make the members of their respective cooperatives aware of the issues their cooperatives have to deal with and the necessity to redefine the *raison d'être* of the cooperatives, the participants of this workshop mean to identify common education needs and take advantage of the interco-op workshops offered by FECHIMM to remedy those needs.

Geographical district : Centre of the island

(Plateau Mont-Royal / Mile-End / Rosemont / Petite-Patrie / Villeray / Saint-Michel / Parc Extension)

Using financial tools

For many housing cooperatives, many questions come up concerning the use of the financial resources available once their mortgage is fully reimbursed. In this context, facing the evolution of their members' individual needs, the representatives of these cooperatives propose setting up a local authority which the cooperatives in the district could join.

Keeping in mind the wish for the cooperatives to get used to new realities, this local authority will be studying a variety of interesting subjects, of which

questions of intergenerational justice, the quality of life, mutual aid and the development of new housing cooperatives.

Pride and motivation

Facing a decrease of participation in the associative life of their cooperative, the participants of this workshop deem it necessary to do something to break the notion that the only advantage in living in a housing cooperative is to have access to a low income apartment. In order to encourage the members and to revive their feelings of pride and belonging, they propose to create a district interco-op committee and its mandate would be to continue the discussion started at the 2008 AGA.

Break the solitude

Convinced of the importance of having more discussions between cooperatives, to improve the management of their collective enterprise, the participants of this workshop propose having an interco-op meeting in the Fall. After exchanging emails, they hope to continue the discussion on a variety of subjects. Composting, buying buildings and internal by-laws are the main subjects they identified for the moment.

Geographical district: South-West / Côte-des-Neiges / Pierrefonds

Sharing management methods

The participants of this workshop think it is important to share expertise on management like secretarial and maintenance duties in order to improve the functioning of their cooperatives. At the end of this workshop, they agreed to let their respective boards of directors know the results of the first meeting and to evaluate their interest in such an approach.

Scale economies

The idea of group buying programs for goods and services on a local basis appealed to the participants of this workshop. Stating as example, the moving services, they consider that they could save a lot if they jointly negotiate the services of such a contractor.

Geographical district: Montréal-North and Laval
(Ahuntsic / Cartierville / Laval / Montréal-North / Saint-Léonard / Tétraultville / Rivière-des-Prairies)

Political action

According to the participants of this workshop, the isolation of each co-op in that district affects their capacity to act on a political level. To attack this problem, they propose creating a political action committee, made up of two delegates per participating cooperative.

The mandate of the committee will be to defend actions at three levels. It will deal with issues on popular education and social justice. It will evaluate the housing needs in the district and the possibility of developing other housing cooperative projects in the district.

Exchange of knowledge

The participants in this workshop want to get together to develop solutions to a common problem. In order to do this, they propose creating an extended board of directors, regrouping two to three members of boards of directors in the district.

The importance of communicating

Considering that the cooperatives would be better off if they knew each other better, the participants of this workshop have worked out a strategy to reach their goal. First, they agreed to identify the co-ops in their district. Then, they intend to get in touch with three to five boards of directors of these cooperatives and organize exploratory meetings with them. They also want to organize one party per year with another co-op of the district.

To encourage the exchanges, the participants are invited to communicate with each other through the web. In order to do this, they must go on www.gmail.com and type in coop.communication@gmail.com and the password « communication ».

Support from FECHIMM

In the following days, FECHIMM will get in touch with the contact-persons in the subgroups set up in workshops to offer support and accompaniment to help them with their networking projects. In order to do this, FECHIMM's education service will offer a free two hour accompaniment session. The type of support offered by FECHIMM will vary according to the needs identified by the different groups.