

Policy Manual



THE AGENCY FOR CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING
L'AGENCE DES COOPÉRATIVES D'HABITATION



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HOUSING

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Sustainability

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1 Preamble

Meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs is the essence of sustainability.¹ To achieve this goal, all sectors of society must adopt courses of action in the economic, environmental and social realms that will help secure a just society and maintain a bio-diverse and life-sustaining planet.

2 Principles of Sustainability

The Agency's approach to sustainability is founded on the Natural Step framework, which presents four science-based principles for sustainable living within the closed system of the Earth. We look to align our practices with these principles:

- Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust.
- Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society.
- Nature is not subject to systematically increasing degradation by physical means.
- People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

¹. Based on *Our Common Future*, Brundtland Commission, 1987.

3 Our Influence

We will strive to conduct our own operations sustainably and, by our example and our assistance, to promote more sustainable practices in the communities with which we engage: our workforce, our clients, our suppliers and other stakeholders associated with co-operative housing. We can do the greatest good by inspiring and encouraging our clients to operate more sustainably.

4 Our Commitment

We will

- shrink our own environmental footprint through the reduction of waste and carbon emissions and the economical use of all natural resources;
- offset our own travel footprint through investments in projects whose goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- produce regular reports on our environmental footprint, making them available through our annual report;
- advance awareness of sustainability among our staff and promote the personal initiatives that further it;
- encourage our clients' efforts towards sustainability;
- encourage our suppliers and other stakeholders to adopt and support sustainable practices.

5 Our Operations

Throughout our offices, we will honour the environment and respect the principle of “reduce, reuse and recycle” through practices that allow us to

- reduce water and energy consumption;
- use less paper;
- cut back our reliance on carbon-intensive transportation;
- reduce waste;
- limit our direct damage to the environment.

6 Our Workforce

We will encourage our staff to adopt sustainable practices by

- facilitating sustainable commuting;
- encouraging staff to meet with their clients virtually as appropriate;
- providing conveniences that will reduce staff use of non-recyclables;

- offering continuing education of staff in sustainable practices;
- inviting staff involvement in the Agency's sustainability planning.

7 Our Clients

Housing co-operatives can contribute to sustainability by fulfilling their mission of providing their members with good-quality housing at a fair price and by lightening their environmental footprint through economical operations and practices that respect the natural world. We will encourage our clients to grow in sustainability by

- helping them become or remain careful stewards of their material and financial resources;
- encouraging them to explore the environmental costs of products, equipment and services;
- promoting affordable initiatives, such as re-caulking, that can be financed from their maintenance budgets;
- sharing comparative and trend data on utility use;
- pointing them to services and programs that will help them become more sustainable;
- encouraging them to improve waste management and reduce their own and their members' water and energy consumption;
- advising them, through our website and elsewhere, of grants, incentives or loans for initiatives to improve their sustainability;
- encouraging them to commission energy audits when seeking financing for major repairs or replacements;
- extending the use of electronic communications and document delivery and storage through our example and advice.

8 Our Suppliers

We will encourage our suppliers to play their part in achieving sustainability through such tactics as

- asking about supplier approaches to sustainability before procurement decisions are made;
- sourcing products locally, where practicable;
- rewarding sustainable and fair-trade businesses with our patronage;
- following procurement practices that do not exclude small suppliers.

9 Other Movement Stakeholders

The Agency will partner with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, where possible, on programs to help our client housing co-operatives become more sustainable. Where our direct participation is impractical, we will advocate and support action on sustainability from CMHC and national and regional federations of housing co-operatives for the benefit of our clients.

10 Our Accountability

In consultation with our staff, we will adopt measurable sustainability initiatives each year and assess the extent to which we complete them. We will share our impact on GHG emissions publicly in our annual report.