

# Housing co-ops and good practices in sustainability: A Canadian perspective

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# Background

- Canada's housing co-ops have enormous potential to show community leadership through environmental good practice
- They face obstacles and challenges along the way
- They have significant advantages that will help them get there
- There are many things co-ops can do on sustainability
- There is a strong business case for change
- Canadian co-ops are already showing leadership on sustainability



# Obstacles and challenges

- modest construction standards have brought low energy efficiency
- lack of access to capital for energy retrofits
- other urgent priorities for capital spending
- shifting government program environment
- inertia



# Significant advantages

## Canadian Housing Co-ops:

- think beyond their own needs to those of the broader community
- are organized communities that can act together
- are inspired to act on sustainability and climate change
- seem to have all seen *An Inconvenient Truth!*
- have an enlightened self-interest in the issue



# What can housing co-ops do?

- reuse, reduce, recycle
- embrace energy efficiency
- retrofit energy systems, building components
- use green energy sources
- manage water usage
- use organic supplies and practices
- source locally
- purchase carbon credits



# The business case: sustainability as enlightened self-interest

Co-op reap business benefits from action on sustainability:

- they lower their operating costs over time
- their housing becomes more affordable for their members
- they are more competitive in the housing market





# Canadian co-ops showing leadership on sustainability

Kitsun Housing Co-op, in  
Vancouver's Kitsilano  
neighbourhood, uses a  
Trombe wall and large  
double-glazed windows to  
absorb solar heat.



Toronto's Hugh Garner Housing Co-op plans to include a stormwater reservoir and solar collection system as part of its green roof project.





Sundance Housing Co-op members were composting and recycling long before the City of Edmonton had programs in place.





Arcadia Housing Co-op began with a green roof and expanded to energy and water use initiatives winning the co-op the City of Toronto's Environmental Award of Excellence in 2006.

