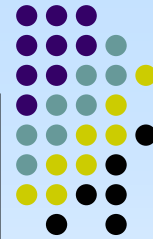


# Community Building and Co-operative Development: The Atkinson Co-op Case Study



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## Acknowledgements



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- Professor Jack Quarter
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- Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto
- Canadian Co-operative Association
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
- The Kahanoff Foundation

## Topics to be Covered



- ✚ Aims and objectives of research
- ✚ Context: policy and description of community
- ✚ Description of conversion process
- ✚ Key issues and further research
- ✚ Future conversions?
- ✚ Policy implications
- ✚ Discussion



## Aims and Objectives



1. Explore reasons and benefits of converting government controlled housing into tenant-managed non-profit co-operatives
2. Document and analyze the process undertaken by a public housing project to convert into a non-profit housing co-operative
3. Develop a framework outlining the process (including key factors) under which a socially excluded community can convert into a non-profit co-operative



## Social Housing in Canada



<h3 style="text-align: center;">Public Housing</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ State built, owned and managed</li><li>➤ Targeted for new immigrants and low-income earners</li><li>➤ Large scale housing projects</li><li>➤ Concentrated poverty</li><li>➤ No income mixing</li></ul>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Non-profit and Co-operative Housing</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Partnerships between the state and the third sector</li><li>➤ Part of a social movement</li><li>➤ Smaller communities integrated into surrounding neighbourhood</li><li>➤ Greater sense of community</li><li>➤ Income and social mix</li></ul>
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## Social Housing in Canada




<h3 style="text-align: center;">Public Housing</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Minimal security of tenure</li><li>➤ Social problems and stigma</li><li>➤ Residents are disempowered and disenfranchised</li><li>➤ Participation is problem and conflict based<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Little “community” incentive to participate</li></ul></li></ul>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Co-operative Housing</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Greater security of tenure</li><li>➤ Community based governance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Local decision making</li></ul></li><li>➤ Meaningful member participation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Formal and informal volunteer participation</li></ul></li></ul>
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## Attempts to Improve Public Housing

- Address a neglected and deteriorating public asset
- Limited and ineffective solutions (private and public sector)
- Increasing resident involvement in management
  - Not real policy making
- New partnerships and housing models
  - Contractual agreements, e.g. Resident Managed Corporations or Tenant Compacts etc.
  - Conversions, e.g. Limited Equity Co-operatives or Non-equity Co-operatives
- Hybrid—Atkinson Housing Co-operative

  
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## The Atkinson Co-operative: Community Characteristics



- Built in 1968 in downtown Toronto
- 409 households and 31 language groups
- Activist tradition with Residents' Associations
- Minimal impact on housing agency
- Manage some community services



- First Canadian conversion of public housing into co-operative housing
- Started conversion in Spring 1992
- Took over 10 years to complete
- Started operating as a co-op on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003

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## The Atkinson Co-operative: Member Characteristics



**Table 1. Age Distribution**

	# of Residents	% of Total
Pre-school (0-5)	132	7%
Primary (6 to 12)	331	17%
Teenagers (13 to 18)	299	15%
Young Adults (19-20)	92	5%
Adults (21 - 59)	935	47%
60+	209	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2. Major Non-English Language Groups**

Language Groups	# of Households	% of Total Households
Vietnamese	62	15%
Spanish	45	11%
Chinese	37	9%
Portuguese	29	7%
Somali	25	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>48%</b>



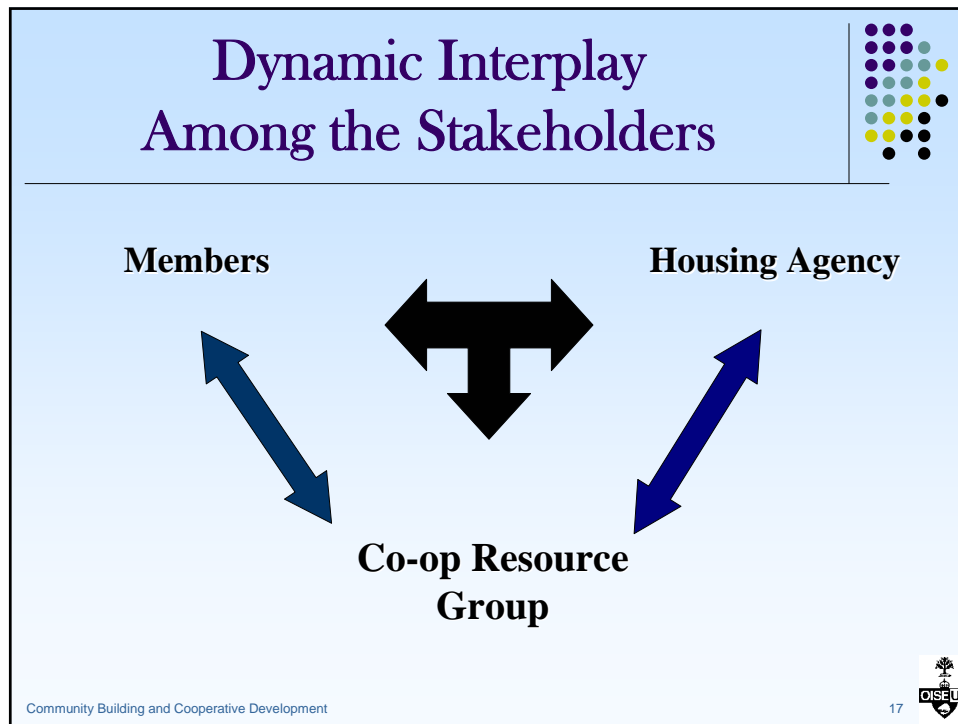
## Findings: Features of A Conversion Framework



### Identify Stakeholders


- Specify current and future roles






## Findings: Features of A Conversion Framework

- **Identify Stakeholders**
- Specify current and future roles
- **Community Development Initiatives**
- Significant role for third party organization
- Co-operative development



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## Co-operative Development



- Capacity building
  - Establish structures to manage a business and a community
- Leadership development
  - Support personality behind push for conversion
  - Transition or succession process
  - Avoid a vacuum
- Education practices
  - Comprehensive, participatory and emancipatory
  - Stressing sustainability of the organization
  - Component of business plan and legal agreements
  - Role in addressing future challenges/conflicts
- **Community Development**



## Community Development



### Education

- About co-operative living
- System of governance
- Develop negotiating and compromise skills:
  - With government agency and with each other
- Information to community and individual households
  - First language and in plain language
- Assess overall community support for change
- A community vote with concurrent membership drive
  - In 1995 and 1998, over 75% voted in support
  - Death of charismatic leader in 1998
- In 2003, 85% of the residents are members



## Findings: Features of A Conversion Framework



### Identify Stakeholders

- Specify current and future roles

### Community Development Initiatives

- Significant role for third party organization
- Co-operative development

### Parameters of Legal Agreements

- Protect a public asset
- Adhere to government legislation
- Prove cost effectiveness
- Outline governance structure and relationship to housing authority
- Partnership model
  - Hybrid model of social housing



## Features of Hybrid Social Housing Model



**Table 3. Description of Stakeholder Responsibilities Across The Social Housing Models**

Feature	Public Housing	Co-operative Housing	Atkinson Co-operative
Finances	Government housing agency	Co-operative and government housing agency	Co-operative and government housing agency
Property management and administration	Government housing agency	Co-operative	Co-operative and government housing agency
Governance	Government housing agency	Co-operative	Co-operative and government housing agency
Education and community programs	Not applicable	Co-operative	Co-operative
Housing charges/rents	Government housing agency	Co-operative and government housing agency	Co-operative and government housing agency



## Findings: Features of A Conversion Framework



### Identify Stakeholders

- Specify current and future roles

### Community Development Initiatives

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### Parameters of Legal Agreements

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### Determining the Final Model

- Sense of ownership
- Sources of revenue
- Resident run governance
- Co-op's responsibility
- May not look like a pure co-op
- Can be a hybrid

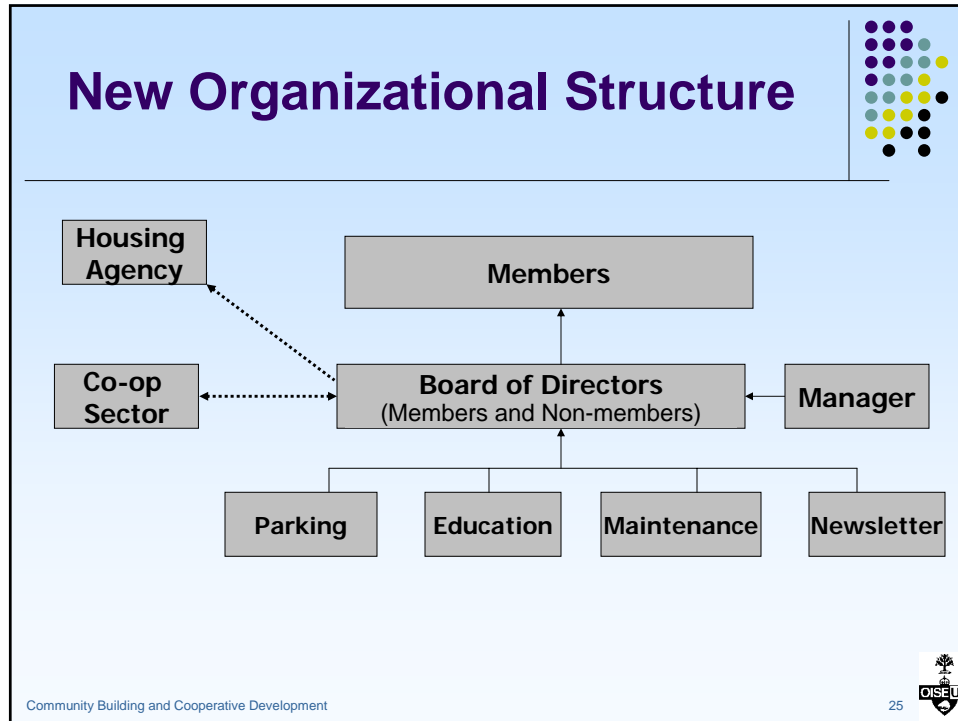


## Emergence of a Hybrid Model



- Atkinson straddles line separating public housing and co-operative housing
  - Partnership between housing agency, co-op sector, and new co-op
- Innovations include
  - Accountability to housing agency
  - Setting capital priorities
  - Non-member directors
  - Community development role for property manager





- ## Evaluating the Model: Organizational Savings
- Where can savings be found?
  - Look to other co-ops
    - Cost per unit: PH-\$4,015; Co-op-\$3,254
    - Savings: \$314
  - 84,000 PH households in Ontario: \$26,376,000
  - Why are there savings?
    - Labour, administration and overhead
    - Less government bureaucracy
    - Greater member involvement
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## Evaluating the Model: Sense of Community



- Level and quality of member involvement
  - Improved lives and community health?
- Representativeness of governance
  - Who makes the decisions?
  - Are youth involved?
  - Sense of empowerment?
  - Impact of not being a pure co-op
- Education and leadership development
  - Effective for membership
  - Succession planning
  - Enhancing and celebrating member involvement



## Key Issues for Stakeholders



### **Residents/Members**

- Greater member participation
- Impact of non-member directors
- Formation and utilization of social capital
  - Managing the tensions—power and control
  - Managing community assets
- Capacity building
  - Utilizing diversity
  - Purposeful cooperative activities
- Collective vs individual responsibility
- Advisors vs decision makers



## Key Issues for Stakeholders



### Housing Agency and Co-op Sector

- Escalating costs of maintaining social housing stock
- Encourage greater social and income mix within public housing stock
- What to do with the public housing stock?
- How much control can the residents expect and are they able to manage their community?
- Can converting to a co-op save money?



## Next Steps: Further Research



- Assess generalizability of conversion framework
  - Track milestones in form of events or activities
- Roles of the different stakeholders
- Improved planning for post-conversion,
  - Period of co-management and multi-stakeholder board
- Specialized community development
- Develop appropriate education and other resources
- Impact of conversions on available subsidized housing shortage



## Next Steps: Further Research



- Evaluate effectiveness and efficacy of new housing model
  - Determine member satisfaction
  - Cost effectiveness—local and societal
  - Participatory evaluation
- Further empower the membership
- Who should provide community development support?
  - CDC? Co-op sector?
- Is this an example of a healthy community?



## Key Issues for Future Conversions



- Length of time
- Role of experts/third party
- Developing specialized capacity building techniques
- Advisory vs decision making
- Greater planning for post-conversion
- Co-management with existing landlord



## Policy Implications: New Partnerships?



- A shortage of available subsidized housing
- Government divestment and devolution
- Incentives to involve private sector unsuccessful
- Co-op and non-profits since 1973
- Encourage community building in public housing
  - \$\$\$\$\$
- One way of dealing with a neglected public asset
  - Atkinson represents new approach
  - City by-law and redevelopments

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## Selected Dissemination Resources



### Web Site

[http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~social\\_housing](http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~social_housing)

### Journal Articles

- Sousa, Jorge, and Quarter, Jack. (2004/in press). Atkinson Housing Co-operative: A leading edge conversion from public housing. *Housing Studies*.
- Sousa, Jorge, and Quarter, Jack. (2004). Converting a public housing project into a tenant-managed housing co-operative: A Canadian case study. *The Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19 (2), 187-198.
- Sousa, Jorge, and Quarter, Jack. (2004). Transforming the Non-Market Housing System in Ontario, *Research Bulletin #20*, January. Centre For Urban and Community Studies, The University of Toronto.

### Technical Reports

- Sousa, Jorge. (2003). *Case study write-up for Atkinson Housing Co-operative*. Commissioned by the Canadian Co-operative Association.
- Lapointe, Linda and Sousa, Jorge. (2002). *Converting Alexandra Park Into The Atkinson Co-operative: An Evaluation of the Process*. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

### Multimedia Recordings

- Full Recordings of Housing Conference: Increasing Tenant Self-management by Converting Public Housing to Co-operative Housing. Available on CD Rom or DVD

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