

# THE AGENCY FOR CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

## POLICY MANUAL

**DATE ISSUED:**

October 2009

**NUMBER:**

1.4.4

**REPLACING ISSUE OF:**

New

**CROSS REFERENCE:**

1.4.2: Ethical Conduct, 3.1.1: Human Resources,  
3.3.1: Procurement, 3.3.2: Outsourcing

**REVIEW CYCLE:**

2 Years

**AUTHORITY:**

Board of Directors

**DUE FOR NEXT REVIEW:**

November 2011

**SUBJECT:**

Sustainability

### 1. Preamble

Meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs is the essence of sustainability<sup>1</sup>. 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.

<sup>1</sup> Based on *Our Common Future*, Brundtland Commission, 1987.

### 3. **Our Influence**

We will strive to conduct our own operations sustainably and, by our example, by our assistance and by our requirements, 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 most good by using our leadership and our resources to inspire 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;
- advance awareness of sustainability among our staff and promote the personal initiatives that further it;
- assist 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 (e.g., water-saving appliances, efficient dishwashing, power-saving light bulbs and equipment, sensor-controlled lights, temperature moderation);
- use less paper (e.g., electronic delivery and storage of documents, paperless meetings, double-sided copying and printing, purchase of paper products made from recycled material, reuse of scrap paper);
- cut back our reliance on carbon-intensive transportation (e.g., video-conference meetings, flying less, trains for short-haul travel, car-pooling, minimal travel for single events);
- reduce waste (e.g., paper, can, bottle and plastic recycling; composting; use of chargeable batteries; battery recycling; reuse of office supplies and materials; purchase of recyclable carpets and furnishings; recycling of outdated equipment and such supplies as toner cartridges);

- limit our direct damage to the environment (e.g., minimal use of non-recyclable plastic products; use of green cleaning products and non-toxic paint, carpets and upholstered furniture).

## **6. Our Workforce**

We will encourage staff to adopt sustainable practices by

- facilitating sustainable commuting (e.g., locating Agency offices near public transit; providing secure bicycle storage; allowing telecommuting, working from home, flexible hours);
- providing conveniences that will reduce staff use of non-recyclables (e.g., fully equipped office kitchens; reusable water bottles);
- offering continuing education of staff in sustainable practices through the Agency intranet, staff presentations, conferences and other means;
- 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 the maintenance budget;
- sharing comparative and trend data on utility use;
- pointing them to services and programs that will help them become more sustainable;
- approving their requests to spend capital reserve funds for energy audits and projects that will improve waste management and reduce their own and their members' utility consumption;
- commissioning energy audits for those 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 suppliers to play their part in achieving sustainability through such tactics as

- investigation of supplier approaches to sustainability, where feasible, before procurement decisions are made;
- supplier education, where appropriate;
- local sourcing of products, where practicable;
- rewarding sustainable and fair-trade businesses with our patronage;
- procurement practices that do not exclude small suppliers.

## **9. Other Movement Stakeholders**

We will advocate and support actions on the part of CMHC and national and regional federations of housing co-operatives to help our client housing co-operatives become more sustainable.

## **10. Our Accountability**

In consultation with our staff, we will adopt measurable sustainability goals each year, regularly assessing our achievements and shortfalls against them.