

From the Board of Directors: Management Changes

Woodsworth Co-op will soon have a different management structure. The Board of Directors has been closely examining our operations, and felt that the time had come to move to a different model. We have now reached the turning point in this process.

This means that we'll soon be saying goodbye to Homestarts Inc., which has been handling management for quite a few years. We've had a long and productive relationship with Homestarts, but given our evolving needs at Woodsworth, we have decided to explore other options.

With that in mind, Homestarts has now been given 60 days' notice of the termination of our contract with them. We thank them for their assistance over the past many years.

What comes next? After a tremendous amount of study, research and discussion, it has been decided to move our co-op back to a 'direct hire' model.

The Board has been interviewing candidates to fill two new management positions. We will be hiring a General Manager and an Administrative Assistant. In addition, we will also be bringing on someone to handle bookkeeping and accounting. This might be an outside service or a part-time position; we're currently looking at some very good options of both types.

At the same time, we will be significantly expanding the existing role of Reliable Maintenance. Reliable has been doing excellent work for us, and they will now be taking direct management of all maintenance tasks. This will give us a much more efficient and responsive system, both for handling large projects and for swiftly resolving work orders for our members.

Reliable Maintenance will transition to the new model in the 60 day period. This will allow time to switch over all the responsibilities. More information will be forthcoming in the near future regarding changes to the work order process. In the meantime please continue to use the systems in place for maintenance needs, and consider only addressing urgent items for a month or so.

These decisions have not been taken lightly. As in previous transitions, this work had to be conducted quietly, without upsetting any of Woodsworth's long-standing business relationships. Discussion of a revamp in our management model goes back many months. Last year, the Board struck a special committee to do further research, looking at every option with fresh eyes, and examining the management approaches being used by other co-ops. We have also been working with CHFT and our co-op lawyers, whose advice has been valuable in helping us do things the right way.

Woodsworth had its own Managers for many years before shifting to use of a management company. So we're not heading into entirely unknown territory. Moreover, we've found in our research that some of the most successful co-ops have already been moving toward hiring their own staff. It's an approach that allows for greater flexibility and better responsiveness to the co-op's needs.

We ask for members' patience during the transition period, which will span the next several months. We are confident that the improvement in efficiency will be well worth the effort. The Board will keep everyone informed as things progress, and will be organizing a forum for members who'd like more in-depth background.