



# Conflict in housing co-operatives

This series discusses conflict in housing co-ops as it affects co-op communities and ultimately co-op governance

## Issue #1: What is conflict?

Conflict is certainly a part of life. It is often predictable because we are all different and our differences lead to conflict from time to time. Conflict is neither harmful nor creative in itself. How we deal with conflict makes it constructive or destructive.

### What is conflict?

Conflict happens when individuals or groups:

- are not getting what they need or want;
- feel their interests are threatened and they need to protect them;
- disagree on how to do things.

Conflicts arise when the concerns, interests or beliefs of individuals or groups are (or appear to be) opposed.

**Conflict is natural.** Some conflict is an expected part of the life of any community because people are different and want different things. People protect their own interests.

**Conflict can be productive** if the people involved try to understand each other and find solutions that are satisfactory to all.

*Conflict is also called*  
**dispute**  
**disagreement**  
**argument**  
**problem**



## At home

Often we are not aware that we are resolving conflicts all the time. Families experience conflict every day. There are so many areas where people can disagree such as:

- clothing choices
- hairstyles; homework
- screen time
- downsizing senior parents
- household chores
- adult children returning home
- food choices/meal prep, and
- blending families.

The list could go on because we know conflicts are part of family life. Most families grow stronger by effectively resolving conflicts as they arise.

## At work

We know that conflict happens in workplaces. Individual employees deal with conflicts related to:

- work space
- workload
- overtime and time off
- work and communication styles
- use of office equipment and more.



## Conflict and housing co-ops

Conflicts are part of our co-op communities.

We cannot create or recreate community without some different points of view and disagreements. While a housing co-op is a community, it is also a housing provider and a housing business. Given the complex nature of a housing co-op, conflicts will arise.



Conflicts can arise through issues such as:

- a lack of understanding of member rights and responsibilities;
- the co-op's legal obligations;
- limited financial resources;
- unrealistic member expectations regarding what the co-op can provide, and
- an inability to understand diversity.

**The question is:** will conflict damage or strengthen a community?

Conflict does not have to damage your housing co-op community. If people understand conflict and know how to deal with it, conflict can make your co-op stronger.



A successful community grows out of the effort to discover how members can:

- live together;
- draw on the diversity of views and ways of living;
- pay attention to everyone's needs, and
- make decisions together.

If it seems that there is no conflict in your community, it is possible that members may be holding back some of their thoughts and feelings. They may feel that it is better to keep quiet and suppress their feelings. This suppression could cause serious trouble later when these feelings erupt.

*This is the first in a series on conflict in housing co-ops. After exploring the nature of conflict, use other resources in the series to learn how to handle conflict in the co-op context.*

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