

Office of the Seniors' Advocate

July 24, 2018

Seniors' Advocate Concerned About Increased Cost of Electricity

The Seniors' Advocate is very concerned about the impact of increased cost of electricity on all citizens, but particularly on lower income seniors. In the past six months the Advocate has received numerous phone calls, emails, letters, and held face to face meetings with groups of seniors. It is well known that very basic of human needs include food, water, warmth and rest yet seniors have consistently expressed concern about their financial ability to provide for the physiological need of warmth.

On July 1, 2018 the cost of electricity increased by 6.6%. Another request to increase is before the Public Utilities Board. Information released to the public and reinforced through media indicate that the cost of electricity may double by 2021. While it is clear that the cost of electricity will increase it is unclear as to by how much. Further, there is no concrete information as to whether any steps are being taken to address the increases thereby alleviating the insecurity that seniors are feeling right now.

Currently almost 20% of citizens in Newfoundland and Labrador are age 65 years and older. Approximately 15,000 senior couples (30,000 individuals) have income of less than \$41,200 while 11,000 single seniors have income of \$24,300 or less.

Many of these seniors live on fixed incomes with limited ability to access paid work. Many own their own homes which require costly renovations in order to become more energy efficient. Through the Advocate's travels she has heard that seniors are already choosing between food, medications, home care, vision care, dental care, and hearing aids, as well as choosing whether they can afford to operate a car or stay in their own home.

The concerns and fears of seniors are real and seniors are asking whether a plan exists to mitigate increased electricity costs and if not how will the burden be alleviated.

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