

Increase Affordable Housing with Province-wide Home Energy-Efficiency Program

Moved by: Town of Okotoks
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WHEREAS there is a shortage of affordable housing across Alberta;

WHEREAS “affordable” refers to housing that can be owned or rented by a household with shelter costs (rent or mortgage, utilities, etc.) that cost less than 30% of before-tax (gross) household income¹;

WHEREAS the shortage of affordable housing and rising cost of utilities disproportionately affects low-income Albertans;

WHEREAS home energy efficiency upgrades are shown to lower energy bills and increase comfort and resilience during cold and extreme weather events²; and

WHEREAS investment in housing generates economic returns, creating jobs and providing stability that contributes to reducing interactions in health, social services, and justice systems,³.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to establish a province-wide, income-qualified home energy-efficiency upgrades program that leverages available federal funding and private investment opportunities, in order to improve affordability of household utilities for low-income Albertans.

BACKGROUND:

Offering a province-wide, income-qualified home energy efficiency program centralizes the administrative burden, avoiding duplication and ensuring equal opportunity for all Albertans to participate. It also allows Alberta to leverage available federal funds while still maintaining control over prioritization and allocation.

Many households in Alberta are in core housing need, meaning they are living in housing that is unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable and cannot afford proper alternatives. The Alberta Municipalities 2026 Advocacy Priorities include *Affordable Housing and Homelessness* which

¹ Affordable Housing Asset Management Framework, Government of Alberta, September 23, 2022 <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/da3888d3-29ac-4637-87d7-5ebe49bddecdd/resource/9967b0d7-230f-4dea-8827-f2c231150d7b/download/sh-affordable-housing-asset-management-framework.pdf>

² Energy Poverty in Canada, Efficiency Canada, <https://www efficiencycanada.org/energy-poverty-in-canada/>

³ Stronger Foundations: Alberta’s 10-year plan to improve and expand affordable housing, Government of Alberta, November 2021 <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/d17f3af6-fa5a-4cb0-b36e-248823cddff1/resource/d11b4795-763a-4221-b6f9-2f5769df50a5/download/sh-stronger-foundations-albertas-10-year-strategy-affordable-housing-2021.pdf>

contains a goal to see “improved access to affordable housing, as well as the supports and services needed to maintain housing and prevent homelessness” can include being able to afford the utility bills related to the affordable housing. *Stronger Foundations*, the Government of Alberta’s 10-year plan to improve and expand affordable housing, identifies the following objectives:

- Albertans have access to safe, affordable housing that meets their needs and promotes quality of life.
- The housing system delivers innovative and sustainable affordable housing options to Albertans in need through partnerships with other orders of government, non-profit and private housing providers, and communities.
- The housing system serves Albertans now and into the future³.

Housing is only affordable long-term if the ongoing costs to live comfortably within the home are also sustainable, including the cost of utilities. When household utility costs rise faster than incomes, residents defer maintenance, face arrears, or go without adequate heating and cooling. Municipalities are often confronted with secondary impacts from the lack of affordable housing associated with increased utility costs: more calls for emergency assistance, higher arrears on utility accounts, increased pressure on housing and homelessness systems, and rising demand for community cooling/warming centres during extreme weather.

A household is considered to be “energy poor” if it spends 10% or more of its after-tax income on home energy bills. Because many households cannot afford—or, in the case of renters, cannot control—necessary energy-efficiency upgrades, rising income alone does not eliminate this burden⁴. In Alberta, 1-in-7 households are affected by energy poverty⁵, and the challenge spans communities of all sizes: in Okotoks, a 2024 survey found that over 30% of residents struggled to afford their utility bills⁶, while in Calgary, about 64% of households face low to moderate energy burdens, indicating difficulty covering up to half of their energy costs⁷.

The steep initial cost and slow return on investment of energy-efficiency upgrades can hinder many residents from taking this step. In most regions, low-income Albertans have limited access to programs that are designed to make energy-efficiency upgrades more affordable. For example, the Government of Alberta’s *Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements*, SA 2018, c6 and associated *Clean Energy Improvements Regulation*, AT 212/2018 allowed Alberta municipalities to offer the Clean Energy Improvement Program (CEIP), giving property owners a low-interest financing option

⁴ Energy Poverty in Canada: Prevalence, social and spatial distribution and implications for research and policy, Riva et. al, 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102237>

⁵ Energy Poverty: An Energy Poverty Strategy for Alberta, Boyd, R. and H. Corbett, All One Sky Foundation, 2018

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ed809f05c460126fe7f10e2/t/5eea6d9da0da297283dc4edb/1592421794193/Alberta%2BEnergy%2BPoverty%2BStrategy.pdf>

⁶ Social Needs Assessment & Strategy, Town of Okotoks, 2025 [https://hdp-ca-prod-app-okotoks-shape-files.s3.ca-central-](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-okotoks-shape-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/7917/4463/7640/Okotoks_Social_Needs_Assessment_Strategy_web.pdf)

[1.amazonaws.com/7917/4463/7640/Okotoks_Social_Needs_Assessment_Strategy_web.pdf](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-okotoks-shape-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/7917/4463/7640/Okotoks_Social_Needs_Assessment_Strategy_web.pdf)

⁷ Advancing Energy Equity Together, Calgary’s Energy Equity Strategy, City of Calgary, 2025-2030 <https://www.calgary.ca/environment/programs/equity.html>

for energy efficiency upgrades through their property taxes. However, CEIP offers insufficient support for renters and low-income residents. Similarly, most municipal rebate programs require participants to pay for upgrades upfront, which prevents many people from enrolling. The Home Energy Upgrades Program was initially available in Edmonton, Calgary, Canmore and ST. Albert with funding from participating municipalities, privation foundations, as well as Government of Canada contributions via the Green Municipal Fund and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.⁸

Currently, it is only offered in the City of Calgary and is designed to overcome the financial barriers experiences by homeowners. It helps homeowners and renters in Calgary with utility-saving services, including no-cost energy efficiency upgrades for income-qualified residents⁹. While the program demonstrates the value of these upgrades to low-income households, it depends on limited local funding and is not available to the remaining 70% of Alberta residents living outside of Calgary. Smaller municipalities and rural areas lack the resources and expertise to offer similar programs.

Investing in energy efficiency retrofits for residential buildings in Alberta also delivers clear economic benefits. By reducing household energy costs, efficiency upgrades free up more disposable income for Albertans, supporting broader economic activity and reducing burdens on social supports. This type of program would also help to sustain Alberta's energy-efficiency workforce, ensuring ongoing market demand for professions that were initially expanded under previous national programs. Examples of these professions include solar PV installers, energy advisors, and related contractor and installation professional services. Additionally, reducing individual household energy use strengthens the resilience of Alberta's energy generation and distribution systems and gives the province greater flexibility in planning and phasing future infrastructure investments.

⁸ Home Energy Upgrades Program, <https://www.homeupgradesprogram.ca/>

⁹ Calgary Home Upgrades Program, City of Calgary <https://www.homeupgradesprogram.ca/calgary>