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Affordable Energy Coalition Gives Government Grade on Energy Poverty
“Says Government Strategy Needed”

HALIFAX – A coalition of poverty, social justice, and environmental organizations focused on ensuring universal access to energy released their second annual grading of the government’s policies to combat energy poverty.

The coalition says high energy bills are making the poor rely on food-banks, contributing to homelessness, and leading to non-payment of other bills. They say energy is a basic necessity that the government must ensure for all Nova Scotians.

The government received a failing grade for energy assistance. The coalition says the cancellation of the Keep the Heat program for an energy sales tax cut has made low-income individuals worse-off and that the government is opposing a low-income program for electricity users proposed to the Utility and Review Board.

“We have been trying to have a low-income energy program like they do in many of the US states here in Nova Scotia, but instead of receiving government support and assistance for this much needed program, government argued against us in the courts and is delaying before the Utility Review Board” said Megan Leslie for Dalhousie Legal Aid Service.

A grade of B was given for energy efficiency. The better grade was principally because of a recently announced pilot project by *Conserve Nova Scotia* that does not required low-income customers to pay up-front. The coalition wants to see a province-wide low-income energy efficiency program in the next provincial budget.

“We think 2 out of 10 households are in energy poverty and saving energy is the best way to fight climate change. There are multiple benefits in creating a province-wide low-income program this year,” said Brendan Haley from the Ecology Action Centre.

The overall grade was a D+ with the failing grade for energy assistance eclipsing the energy efficiency grade. The coalition says that multiple government departments need to develop a strategy to combat energy poverty. The coalition supports credits on energy bills to ensure affordability for all and improved energy efficiency for tenants, homeowners, and affordable housing units.

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Canadian Mental Health Association – Nova Scotia

Community Action on Homelessness

Community Advocates Network

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Diaconate of All Nations Church

Ecology Action Centre

Face of Poverty Coalition

Family SOS

Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy

Halifax Coalition Against Poverty

North End Community Health Centre

Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group

Social Activist Law Student Association

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

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