

Front commun pour la justice sociale du N.-B. inc.

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Open letter

September 13, 2011

Honourable Sue Stultz
Minister of Social Development
Fredericton, NB

Hon. Stultz:

There are approximately 100,000 New Brunswickers living below the poverty line. A certain percentage of them will, as they did in years past, need help to offset the cost of heating their homes this coming winter. Market prices indicate that N.B. citizens will pay more in 2011-2012 than they did last winter to keep themselves and their family warm.

Indeed, since April 2010, NB Power billing formula for electricity was changed from a **two-level fee system** (9.69 cents per Kilowatt-hour (kWh) for the first 1,300 kWh and 9.22 cents for the use of electricity beyond 1,300 kWh) to a **one-level system**, irrespective of power usage. Electricity is now being billed at 9.85 cents per kWh, a **16-cent per kWh increase** over the April 2010 rate.

In January 2011, the price of **heating oil** in effect in the Moncton area was 0.899 cents a litre. In September 2011, the price had gone up to \$1.014 a litre. This is an increase of 0.115\$ per litre, or a **12.8% price increase**.

For a number of years, the New Brunswick government has approved specific programs to help individuals and families pay part of their heating bills. As the month of October is near, could you please answer the following questions related to government's assistance:

- Will there be a Home Energy Assistance Program as well as an Emergency Fuel Benefit Program this year? If so, what will be the starting date?
- Will the heating supplements be made available for the following: people working at minimum wage, seniors, those on social assistance, low-income home owners, people in NB Housing or in subsidize apartments but currently paying their heat?
- Will the eligibility criteria be the same as those used in 2010-2011? Are you in a position to specify what the 2011-2012 criteria will be?
- Will the amount of provincial money allocated to N.B. citizens be the same as last year or will there be increase in 2011-2012?
- Will the total budget cost for the Home Energy Assistance Program and that of the Emergency Fuel Benefit Program be the same or will it be higher?
- Will the N.B. government be responsible to administer these programs?

With the cold months rapidly approaching, low income New Brunswickers will soon need to know if they can rely on their government to help them with their heating bills.

We would appreciate receiving this information as soon as possible.

Jean-Claude Basque, Provincial Coordinator

c.c. Victor Boudreau, Liberal party
Dominic Cardy, NDP
Jack MacDougall, Green Party