

Dealing with the cold: the Canadian Experience

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Natural Resources
Canada

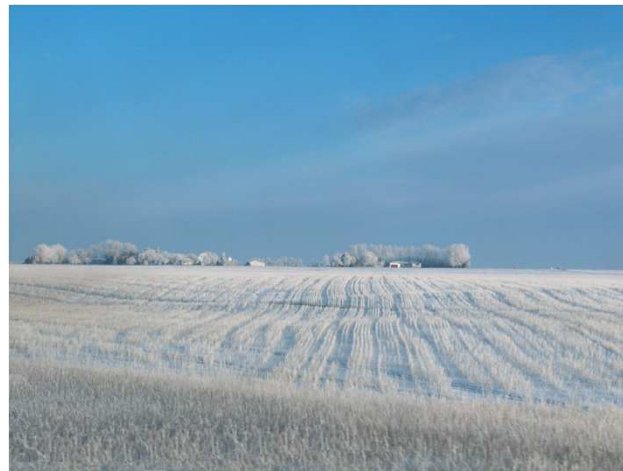
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Canada

Canadian Overview



- We are a cold country
 - Adequate home heating required to maintain life and the integrity of home infrastructure
- We have relatively inexpensive energy
 - Rich in fossil fuels and hydro-electricity



Canadian Overview



- Fuel poverty has only recently entered our lexicon
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - <http://www.youtube.com/user/habitatforhumanityc>

New rules promised after man freezes can be severe

Postmedia News
CALGARY

The province's utility regulator is promising tough new rules on disconnecting natural gas customers who are behind on their bills and reconnecting those who pay up in the wake of a fatality inquiry report released Tuesday into a Calgary man's death from hypothermia.

Provincial court Judge Bruce Millar was sharply critical of the fact the Alberta Utility Commission was unaware that John Davis died in his unheated home until three years after the November 2006 incident. "There is a fundamental problem," Millar said.

"The AUC should be in a position to initiate a review, make changes if needed, and communicate with Albertans within a time frame that is more responsive to an accident

than this."

With the city in the grips of a deep chill, Davis froze to death in his Beddington Heights residence because the heat remained cut off months after his overdue bill, a reconnection fee and a security deposit had been paid by his mother.

Doreen Davis said she's still upset that her repeated calls to have her chronically ill and depressed son's gas turned back on yielded no results.

"People tell me I should sue the companies over what happened, but I don't want any money," Davis said. "I just want to make sure that no one else dies alone in the cold."

Another person died in 2006 in northern Alberta after the utility turned off his heat. That year, the fatality report said there were 33,000 disconnections among the one million-plus Alberta customers.

Why is this becoming an issue?



- Energy costs are increasing
 - Switching to clean energy alternatives
 - More expensive than current choices
 - Ontario
 - Polarisation of incomes
 - Lower income brackets not keeping pace with rising costs of energy
 - Greatest impact on most vulnerable members of society
 - Fuel poverty is poverty
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What can be done?



- Raise incomes
 - Recent increases to Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors
 - Not going to happen on a large scale in the short term
 - Lower energy costs
 - Clean energy alternatives cost more than current choices
 - Many government programs available to make houses more energy efficient
 - Little benefit to most vulnerable unless landlord take advantage
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What can be done?



- Learn from the UK!
 - What is the depth of the problem and what can be done?
 - Where is it headed?
 - Develop appropriate policies
 - Subsidize rates for low income users
 - Provincial statutes make this difficult
 - Will not result in more efficient energy use
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Can bioenergy play a role?



- Local and/or alternative energy generation for social housing complexes (ONPHA and CHF)
 - Rural and remote areas
 - Replace subsidy programs with district heating alternatives
 - Will always be a challenge until conventional prices rise to a point that alternatives are considered seriously.
 - Alternatives should developed now so they can be used when needed
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Review



- A new and little understood problem in Canada
- Important to stay ahead of the problem as the consequences can be severe
- Renewables can be part of the solution



Questions?

