

Resolution 1A

ESTABLISHING PROVINCIAL PROGRAM TO COMPENSATE LOW INCOME FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS FOR FOOD REPLACEMENT COSTS DUE TO POWER OUTAGES (PASSED)

⇒ Town of Shelburne

WHEREAS during tropical storm Arthur that occurred July 2014 countless people in Nova Scotia spent between 12 and 120 hours without power; and

WHEREAS many of these same people lost all of the food they had in their refrigeration units; and

WHEREAS several people in the province are seniors, single income families and working poor, living on extremely low or fixed incomes making it impossible for them to replace the food that was lost or to purchase a generator or home owners insurance; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UNSM call upon the Province to develop a provincial program, in conjunction with Nova Scotia Power and all municipal utilities, to compensate low income individuals and families for food losses incurred due to power outages of more than 24 hours.

Response from:
Emergency Management Office

RESPONSE:

In response to UNSM Resolution 1A, an environmental scan of provincial jurisdictions was undertaken to identify existing programs or policies specific to low income families and individuals for food replacement costs incurred due to power outages. This scan failed to identify a standalone program or policy specific to low income families or individuals having food replaced due to power outages in Canada.

The principle finding from the jurisdictional scan highlighted that a majority of jurisdictions use a principle based decision-making approach that permits individual caseworkers to assess and action this type of request on a case by case basis. Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services currently uses this approach with clients receiving income assistance.

For Nova Scotians not receiving income assistance and in financial need, an assessment for income assistance can be requested at any point in time at a regional office.

A third option for Nova Scotians is a homeowner's insurance policy. Most policies include food replacement as damage when filing a claim. The limit for food replacement as well as what may or may not be included in a claim is specific to each insurance company and policy. Furthermore, an individual must assess the approximate anticipated replacement value of the food against the deductible for the home insurance policy as well as the impact this claim may have on their premiums. This information has been confirmed by the Insurance Bureau of Canada. In response to UNSM Resolution 1A, an environmental scan of provincial jurisdictions was undertaken to identify existing programs or policies specific to low income families and individuals for food replacement costs incurred due to power outages. This scan failed to identify a standalone program or policy specific to low income families or individuals having food replaced due to power outages in Canada.

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Response from:
Department of Community Services

RESPONSE:

The Department of Community Services currently provides relief to eligible recipients of the Employment Support & Income Assistance program in times of emergency, including lengthy power outages. Yet there are many more low-income Nova Scotians outside the ES/A program and the jurisdiction of the department-working poor and seniors.

At a time when the Province is calling for fiscal restraint, and progressive corporations are recognizing the value and goodwill to be gained from being socially responsible, Community Services would propose that any program to compensate low income Nova Scotians for food replacement costs to power outages of more than 24 hours be fully funded by NSP.

The department would be prepared to participate in these discussions, share experiences and administrative data.