

Energy efficiency for affordable housing providers: Why energy efficiency matters

Canada's buildings contribute 18 percent of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions. Affordable housing buildings are often older and as a result more than 20 percent of affordable housing is in only fair or poor condition. This means that the affordable housing sector has an important role to play in decreasing its emissions and reducing its climate footprint. Many housing providers will be undertaking capital repairs to their aging stock in the coming years. This presents an opportunity to integrate energy efficient strategies into necessary capital repairs.

According to the [Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners \(CUSP\)](#), 45% of Canadian households living in nonmarket (subsidized) housing are responsible for paying one or more energy bills and 17% are experiencing energy poverty.

CUSP defines energy poverty as households or communities that struggle to heat and cool their homes and power their lights and appliances. Energy poverty can have many impacts:

- Residents may experience discomfort because their homes are too hot or too cold.
- Utilities may be shut off by providers, leading to significant disruptions at home.
- Households may not have enough money for other essentials, like food and medication.

This document is part of Understanding Energy Efficiency: A Guide for Affordable Housing Providers.

[Click here](#) to access the full guide.

- Residents may experience health problems such as respiratory illness, high stress loads, mental health difficulties and decreased community engagement.

Energy efficiency projects can help address energy poverty by renewing equipment, improving living conditions and reducing energy costs for both housing providers and residents.

RESULTS OF THE CMHC SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING SURVEY – RENTAL STRUCTURES¹

Condition and repair status of the units	Percentage of housing
Excellent or good	55%
Average	23%
Fair or poor	22%

Age of affordable housing building	Percentage of housing
Pre-1970	19%
1970-1989	57%
1990 or later	25%

The Sustainable Affordable Housing initiative, delivered through the Green Municipal Fund, supports affordable housing providers to improve their energy efficiency. This is achieved through funding and capacity development support for energy efficient retrofits and new builds. [Visit our website](#) for more information, including how to access a regional energy coach.

¹ <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2021/results-social-affordable-housing-survey-rental-structures>