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TELEPHONE

1.306.665.1915

EMAIL

info@environmentalsociety.ca

WEBSITE

www.environmentalsociety.ca

MAIL

PO Box 1372 Saskatoon SK S7K 3N9

OFFICE

220 20th Street West Saskatoon

February 14, 2024

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Canada

jonathan.wilkinson@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

steven.guilbeault@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance

chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Wilkinson, Minister Guilbeault, and Minister Freeland:

We are contacting you about the wildly successful but recently cancelled Greener Homes Grant program. We are concerned about this cancellation, only two-and-a-half years after its launch. Reducing emissions in the residential building sector is a critical step towards meeting Canada's climate commitments. And in 2022, greenhouse gas emissions in homes retrofitted through the Greener Homes Grant program were reduced by a significant 26 per cent.¹ We at the Saskatchewan Environmental Society believe that successful climate-resilience programs that demonstrate clear energy savings and greenhouse gas emissions reductions should be improved and expanded upon, not closed.

Closing this program poses a significant threat to the momentum gained in encouraging homeowners to take meaningful climate action. The progress many Canadians have made in reducing our carbon footprint by upgrading the energy efficiency of our homes is now under the threat of stalling. The cancellation of the current program will also mean that the infrastructure the Government of Canada has helped build through the employment of thousands of energy auditors and contractors across the country will be gutted as these skilled tradespeople leave for other employment opportunities.² It is also critical that Canada continues its greenhouse gas emissions reduction momentum. The Pembina Institute estimates that Canada needs to retrofit 600,000 existing residential homes each year (or 11.4 million homes retrofitted by 2040) to help reach 2050 net-zero targets.³ And so far, Canada's primary policy instruments for accelerating the uptake of residential retrofits have been the Canada Greener Homes Grant and the Greener Homes Loan programs.

¹ Retrofitting Canada's homes: Progress report #1, 2023.

<https://greencommunitiescanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FINAL-GCC-DER-Report.pdf>

² Canada's Greener Homes program is ending: Thousands of layoffs could follow, 2024.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bakx-canada-greener-homes-grant-retrofit-application-layoffs-1.7100748>

³ Beyond energy efficiency: Deep retrofits save more than just money, 2024.

<https://www.pembina.org/pub/beyond-energy-efficiency>



We understand that the Government of Canada intends to relaunch the Greener Homes Grant program with a focus on lower- and moderate-income Canadians. This is welcome news, and we urge you to immediately launch a new, improved program for all Canadian households including those with lower incomes. Based on our on-the-ground experience and expertise in building efficiency, we also suggest that the Government of Canada introduce a new funding stream for replacing heating and cooling equipment. Most heating systems in homes are replaced when they fail. Therefore, they need to be replaced within hours of the failure. Similarly, cooling equipment is normally replaced within days or weeks of failure. This means that homeowners can't take advantage of the Greener Homes Grant program to upgrade and will most often not move to a more efficient (i.e., higher capital cost) system. The energy and greenhouse gas savings from heating and cooling system upgrades can easily be estimated without an EnerGuide Audit. This would free up auditing resources and enable many more households to take advantage of funding to improve their heating and cooling systems. The main Greener Homes Grant could then be limited to deeper retrofits on homes and could be tied to improvements in insulation and air sealing of buildings, and other improvements that are normally planned, instead of on systems being replaced on an urgent basis.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. We trust your commitment to represent the best interests of homeowners and our shared dedication to securing a resilient, sustainable future for all Canadians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Megan Van Buskirk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Megan Van Buskirk
Associate Director
Saskatchewan Environmental Society