

Return to Written Question

THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE COCHRANE
MINSTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

SENIORS HOME HEATING FUEL SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by Mr. Vanthuyne on March 15, 2018 regarding the Senior Home Heating Fuel Subsidy program

The Senior Home Heating Subsidy, or SHHS, is intended to assist low to modest income seniors with the cost associated with heating their homes. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, undertook a review of the SHHS and has, as a result, implemented a number of enhancements to the program including:

- Extension of the program to seniors who rent their own self-contained unit that have heating costs in addition to rent;
- Increased eligibility income thresholds;
- Removal of the phase out income thresholds to ensure eligible seniors receive 100 percent of the subsidy;
- A monetary-based subsidy moved from a fuel allocation subsidy to ensure seniors receive their full benefit; and
- A modification to how communities are allocated to specific zones to better reflect the cost of living in each community.

The change to a monetary-based system was implemented based on a sound methodology that determined a consistent and fair subsidy amount for seniors. By ensuring that the subsidy amount is appropriate, seniors will continue to receive support towards the costs of heating their homes. This change also ensures that seniors receive 100 percent of the subsidy whereas under the previous program seniors were underutilizing their benefits.

The change to a monetary-based subsidy will continue to enable seniors to choose one or more heating types or suppliers and provide seniors the flexibility to determine how much of their subsidy is paid to each of their suppliers.

As previously noted the enhancements include a rezoning of communities to better reflect the cost of living in each community. Each zone was determined using the Living Cost Differential; a method used to determine the different cost of living in each community by measuring the cost of a basket of goods and services. The three zones were determined by grouping together communities with comparable costs for goods and services.

The SHHS has been expanded to allow seniors who rent their homes and have a heating cost to access the program.

The SHHS is intended to assist seniors with the costs associated with heating their homes.

By increasing the income thresholds and eliminating the phase out income thresholds, extending the program to renters and ensuring all seniors receive the full subsidy, we believe that over 300 seniors will be positively impacted.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table details of the changes in the zones and eligibilities of the Senior Home Heating Subsidy Program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.