

## **NDP hypocrisy hurts low-income Nova Scotians**

One of the things I often hear from constituents is that they're having a tough time making ends meet.

So I wasn't surprised when, at a recent presentation to our Liberal caucus, we heard that virtually every household in Nova Scotia is worse off financially than they were in October of 2008.

Discretionary income (the money that doesn't pay for necessities) is shrinking.

The inflation rate is almost double the average annual wage increase.

And since the NDP government came to power in 2009, energy prices have risen by 28 percent.

So it's not surprising Nova Scotians feel like they can't get ahead. They can't.

What is surprising, though, is the Dexter government's decision to reduce funding to the Good Neighbour Energy Fund. This decision hurts low-income Nova Scotians.

Last year, the government gave the fund \$800,000 (an initial \$400,000 and then another injection of \$400,000 when the fund ran out).

Why Dexter and company think low-income Nova Scotians will be more able to pay increasing power bills this year is a mystery. Their cut to the fund has forced the Salvation Army (which administers the plan) to make some tough choices.

The Salvation Army was forced to shorten the application period, pushing it back by two weeks during the coldest time of the year. And where once Nova Scotians could apply for the \$300 rebate every two years, now they'll have to wait three years to request this assistance.

What's surprising for so many is that the NDP's actions in government are a far cry from their words in opposition. In September 2008, then Opposition-Leader Darrell Dexter called on the provincial government to double the Keep the Heat rebate program from \$200 to \$400. Instead, this NDP government renamed the program (it's now called the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, or HARP) and offers rebates of only \$100 to \$200 for low income recipients.

Adding insult to injury is the NDP's efficiency tax on power, which they spoke against in opposition. The NDP added this charge to everyone's power bill, regardless of ability to pay, and it costs Nova Scotians \$40 million every year.

So under the NDP, costs (particularly for power) have risen. Incomes have stagnated. We've lost thousands of jobs – 5,000 in December alone. And this government has failed to help the very people it claims to care about, even as it handed over half a billion dollars to big corporations.

That's hardly "a better deal for today's families".

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