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The Low-Income Energy Network's (LIEN) and The Canadian Environmental Association's (CELA) Joint Comments for the Consultation on [Canada Gazette, Part I, Volume 160, Number 25: Regulations Amending the Energy Efficiency Regulation, 2016 \(Amendment 19\)](#)

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General Comment

The Canadian Environmental Law Association ("CELA") and the Low-Income Energy Network ("LIEN") are pleased to provide comments on the proposed Amendment 19 to Canada's Energy Efficiency Regulations.

CELA is a specialty legal aid clinic dedicated to advancing environmental equity, environmental justice, and public health. For more than fifty years, CELA has worked to ensure that environmental laws and policies protect vulnerable communities and provide meaningful opportunities for public participation in environmental decision-making. CELA also co-founded and co-administers the Low-Income Energy Network ("LIEN"), a province-wide network that works to reduce energy poverty and improve energy affordability for low-income households in Ontario.

Our mandates are mostly provincial, but federal efficiency standards still shape what products are on the market and how much low-income households pay for energy. That is why we are commenting on Amendment 19.

Executive summary comment

CELA and LIEN support strong minimum energy performance standards. They are a key tool for climate action, energy efficiency and long-term affordability. But Amendment 19 should not be judged only by how much energy or money it saves overall. The Government should also look at who pays the upfront costs, who receives the benefits, and whether the result is actually fair.

Energy-efficient products can save money and help households cope with a changing climate, but only if people can actually afford them. NRCan should look at how the new standards affect households at different income levels, and find ways to make sure low-income households, renters and other vulnerable consumers can actually benefit from higher standards, not just pay more for them upfront.

Efficiency standards also matter for climate resilience. As extreme heat becomes more common, efficient appliances can lower energy use, ease pressure on the grid and protect households from rising costs. That protection matters most for the households with the least room in their budgets to adapt. Standards should be strong enough that

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Canada does not get stuck with inefficient technology for years to come, and should support the country's longer-term goals on climate, electrification and affordability.

“Affordability” should not simply mean that the Canadian economy saves money in aggregate. It should mean that households experiencing energy poverty are actually better off.

Issues comment

CELA and LIEN support the Government's view that energy efficiency helps with affordability, energy security, climate action and grid resilience. But Amendment 19's affordability benefits should not just be measured in aggregate. They should also be assessed from the point of view of households experiencing energy poverty.

For low-income households, energy efficiency can be one of the best ways to lower energy bills and cope with rising costs and climate impacts. But that only works if efficient products are actually affordable to buy in the first place. The Government should pair minimum standards with targeted programs that help these households access efficient products and see the savings.

CELA and LIEN also share a concern raised by others in this consultation. The Energy Efficiency Act and its Regulations were not excluded from the 2025 Free Trade and Labour Mobility Act. If a province's standards are treated as “comparable” to the federal Regulations but turn out to be weaker in practice, low-income households in that province could end up buying less-efficient products that cost more to run. That would undercut the very gains Amendment 19 is meant to deliver. NRCan should make sure this kind of mutual recognition cannot be used to weaken the protection the federal Regulations provide to households experiencing energy poverty.

The Government should study how Amendment 19 affects different groups, including low-income households, renters, people with disabilities, and rural, remote and northern communities. This should pay close attention to rental housing, where landlords choose the appliances but tenants pay the ongoing energy costs.

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Finally, energy efficiency is not just about cutting emissions. It is also a way to build climate resilience. As extreme heat becomes more common, efficient appliances can help households manage rising energy needs, avoid higher costs and ease demand on the grid. Standards should be strong enough to avoid locking in outdated technology, and should connect to the Government's broader work on energy poverty, electrification and affordability.

Energy efficiency is essential, but efficiency standards on their own do not guarantee affordability or fairness.

The government should be asking more than “How much energy and money will this save Canada?” It should also ask: “Which households will benefit, which will bear the costs, and what do we need to do to make sure households experiencing energy poverty are among the first to benefit?”

Background Comment

CELA and LIEN strongly support keeping the Energy Efficiency Regulations up to date. They are an important tool for cutting energy use, emissions and costs. Minimum standards matter a lot for energy poverty and fairness, because they raise the efficiency of products on the market without asking individual consumers, many of whom cannot afford to, to make these investments on their own.

But big savings overall do not automatically mean fair outcomes. The projected \$214 billion in utility-bill savings is impressive, but the Government should also look at who actually receives those savings. Households experiencing energy poverty are often the least able to afford new, efficient appliances, so they may keep relying on older, less efficient ones. The Government's assessment should look at the impact on low-income households, renters, people with disabilities, and rural, remote and northern communities.

Minimum standards should be paired with targeted programs that help low-income households replace the inefficient appliances they already own. Standards keep new inefficient products off the market, but they do not do anything about the older ones already sitting in Canadian homes. Without extra support, the households that stand to benefit most may be the ones least able to get there.

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The Government should also treat energy efficiency as a way to build climate resilience and fairness. As extreme heat and cooling needs increase, efficient appliances can lower energy costs, ease pressure on the grid, and help both households and the electricity system cope. This matters most for low-income households, who have the least room to absorb higher costs during extreme weather.

Future standards should be ambitious enough that Canada does not get stuck with outdated technology, and they should reflect the country's changing climate, electrification needs and growing electricity demand. Energy efficiency is not just about cutting energy use and emissions. It is also part of a bigger effort to reduce energy poverty and help households and communities become more climate resilient.

The regulations are a fairness success story, but only if we make sure the people who need energy savings most actually get them.

Objective comments

CELA and LIEN support Amendment 19's objectives, especially reducing energy use and grid demand through stronger minimum standards. We recommend expanding the objectives to explicitly include energy affordability, energy equity and climate resilience.

Energy efficiency is an important tool for addressing energy poverty. By taking inefficient products off the market, minimum standards deliver savings without expecting consumers to have the money or know-how to find the most efficient product themselves. That matters most for households experiencing energy poverty, who may spend a large share of their income on energy.

Amendment 19 should include a clear objective of reducing household energy burdens and improving affordability, with a focus on low-income and other households carrying a heavier burden. The Government should also look at how the standards affect different groups, to make sure the benefits are shared fairly and that higher upfront costs do not fall hardest on low-income households.

We also recommend adding climate resilience as an explicit objective. As climate change brings more extreme heat and cooling needs, efficient products can help households manage rising energy demand while easing pressure on the grid. This

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matters most for low-income households, who have less capacity to absorb higher costs during extreme weather.

CELA and LIEN support removing outdated standards and cutting unnecessary red tape. But modernizing the rules should not come at the cost of protecting the environment, consumers or fairness. Amendment 19 should lay the groundwork for even stronger standards down the road, as technology, the climate and Canada's electricity system continue to change.

Description comment

CELA and LIEN support the direction of Amendment 19 and the use of minimum standards to remove inefficient products from the Canadian market, cut energy use and emissions, and strengthen energy security. We are especially glad to see standards expanded to cover heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, recovery ventilators, appliances and cooling equipment.

We recommend the Government widen its assessment to look at energy poverty, fairness and climate resilience. The proposal aims for maximum savings that are "technologically and economically feasible." But from an energy poverty point of view, the real question is not just whether a product pays off over its lifetime. It is whether someone can actually afford to buy it in the first place.

Minimum standards matter a lot for low-income households, because they make sure consumers who cannot pay extra for efficiency are not stuck choosing between inefficient products. But standards alone will not fix the inefficient equipment already in people's homes, and they will not make sure low-income households can afford newer technology like heat pump water heaters. As standards get stronger, NRCAN should also make sure lower-cost heat pump water heaters stay on the market, so rising standards do not end up pricing out the very households they are meant to help. Amendment 19 should be paired with targeted programs that help with appliance replacement, electrification and access to efficient technology.

We also encourage NRCAN to think about what Amendment 19 means for renters, who make up about a third of Canadian households and are more likely to be low-income. Many of the products covered are common in rental housing, where landlords choose

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what to buy but tenants pay the energy bills. The Government should look at this mismatch and make sure the savings actually reach tenants, including low-income tenants, instead of mostly benefiting property owners.

Climate resilience should also be a bigger part of the reasoning behind Amendment 19. As extreme heat becomes more common and cooling becomes more essential, efficient cooling equipment can help households stay safe while keeping costs and demand on the grid down. This matters most for low-income households, who have the least capacity to absorb higher costs during extreme weather.

CELA and LIEN support harmonizing with U.S. and other international standards where it makes sense, but that should not stop Canada from adopting stronger standards when climate, energy security, affordability or fairness call for it. We are also concerned that several of the proposed compliance dates for harmonized water heater and furnace standards are delayed by years, in some cases until 2032. From an energy poverty point of view, every year of delay is another year that households with the highest energy burdens wait for savings on the products they need most. We urge NRCan to move these dates earlier wherever it can. We support rules that stop Canada's standards from being weakened if another jurisdiction lowers its own, but Canada should still be free to go further and faster than others. Any provision that automatically updates Canadian rules to match another jurisdiction's should come with clear safeguards, so Canada's efficiency, climate and fairness goals stay front and centre.

In short, Amendment 19 is a chance for Canada's energy efficiency framework to do more than cut overall energy use. It can also reduce energy poverty, improve affordability, support a fair electrification transition, and build climate resilience. These outcomes should be part of how the Government sets and rolls out the new standards.

Minimum efficiency standards are inherently progressive when designed well.

They stop the market from giving low-income consumers a bad choice: a cheap product that costs more to run, or an efficient product they cannot afford.

Don't stop at setting the minimum standard. Make sure low-income households can actually replace their existing inefficient equipment and access the next generation of efficient technologies.

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Regulatory development comment

CELA and LIEN support NRCan's ongoing consultation on Amendment 19, and the value of engaging manufacturers, utilities, efficiency advocates, Indigenous partners, consumers and other stakeholders. We would encourage NRCan to strengthen this process by making sure households experiencing energy poverty, low-income tenants and other affected consumers are genuinely represented, and by treating fairness as a central part of the process rather than an afterthought.

The consultation record shows why this matters. Other advocates have pointed out that electric coil cooktops, whether standalone or built into a range, are common in rental housing and low-income households, largely because they cost less upfront than smooth electric styles. Removing the efficiency requirement for this product could raise energy costs for these households for the roughly 18 years a coil cooktop typically lasts. NRCan proposes removing the requirement mainly because shipment volumes are low, but that misses the point: a product can look small in the aggregate numbers and still matter a great deal to the people who rely on it most. CELA and LIEN agree the efficiency standard for electric coil cooktops should stay in place, and that regulatory decisions should weigh who uses a product and who bears the consequences, not just overall market volume.

We are also concerned about removing EnerGuide labels from cooking products. A 2020 federal survey found that about half of consumers who bought a labelled product said the label influenced their decision. That shows how much shoppers, especially those on tight budgets, rely on clear, at-a-glance information rather than an online product list. Digital information is not a real substitute for a clear label right on the appliance, at the point of purchase, since people should not have to research and calculate operating costs themselves, especially when affordability is already a concern. CELA and LIEN encourage NRCan to keep clear labels on cooking appliances and treat online information as a bonus, not a replacement.

The record on heat pump water heaters also shows why affordability needs more attention. Stakeholders have raised concerns that the efficiency requirements could limit affordable models and slow adoption, especially after changes to federal retrofit incentives. NRCan's response focuses on whether products are available, but availability is not the same as affordability. A market that only offers pricier heat pump water heaters does not help households who cannot pay that premium. The

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Government should look at upfront costs, lifetime savings and access to financial help, especially for low-income households and tenants.

CELA and LIEN also encourage NRCan to rethink its approach to harmonization. Matching U.S. standards can lower trade and compliance costs, but it should not cap Canadian ambition, and it should not be a reason to delay savings that households need now. Several of the proposed compliance dates for harmonized products are set years after the equivalent U.S. requirements already took effect. Wherever those products are already sold in Canada, NRCan should shorten the transition period instead of defaulting to the latest date allowed. Canada's energy system, housing stock, climate and affordability challenges are also different from those in the United States. Canada should keep the ability to adopt stronger standards where needed, and make sure any rule that automatically follows another jurisdiction's changes does not end up weakening our own standards without anyone noticing.

Finally, the consultation and analysis should factor in climate resilience and energy poverty. Energy efficiency matters for cutting emissions, but it is also increasingly important for helping households cope with extreme heat, rising cooling needs and other climate pressures, especially for low-income households, who have the least financial room to adapt.

CELA and LIEN recommend NRCan carry out this kind of analysis for Amendment 19 and future amendments, looking at the impact on low-income households, renters, people with disabilities, Indigenous communities, and rural, remote and northern communities. That is how Canada's efficiency framework can deliver fairness and resilience for the households hit hardest by energy poverty, not just savings on paper.

NRCan pays close attention to the costs of regulation for manufacturers, dealers and industry, but is much less clear about the costs inefficient products impose on low-income consumers.

When industry says a standard adds costs, NRCan looks closely at those costs. Households deserve the same level of attention when inefficient products stay on the market and drive up their bills, especially households with the least room to absorb them.

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Regulatory analysis section comment

The government's own analysis shows Amendment 19 would deliver strong savings overall, \$26.7 billion by 2050, and we support that direction. But the analysis also raises several fairness concerns, using the government's own data, that have not been fully addressed. These should be resolved before the rules are finalized.

Upfront costs are a bigger problem than the report suggests. For products like gas clothes dryers, pool pump motors and commercial gas water heaters, the government's own numbers show that more than half of buyers, and in some cases three-quarters, could end up paying more than they save. Looking only at Canada-wide totals hides this risk for households who cannot afford a higher price today, even if it would pay off over 10 to 15 years. We recommend the government show this risk broken down by income level, and pair the new standards with rebates or financing to help these households cover the higher upfront cost.

Renters are being left out. About a third of Canadian households rent, and renters are more likely to be low-income. The government's own analysis admits that when utilities are included in rent, tenants may not benefit from more efficient appliances, since landlords choose the appliances but do not pay the energy bills. No fix is proposed for this. We recommend the government study this problem directly and look at ways to make sure landlords pass the savings on to tenants.

Rural, remote and Indigenous communities: a mixed bag. These communities often already pay more for energy, so they could gain the most from stronger standards. But heat pump water heaters, the very technology the new standards favour, do not perform as well in cold climates, and much of the data behind the standards comes from warmer, more urban areas. We recommend testing performance by climate zone instead of applying one standard nationwide, and funding retrofit programs in northern and remote communities at the same level as elsewhere.

The impact on low-income households is mentioned, but never measured. The government's own equity review says low-income households "could be more significantly affected" by higher costs, but does not say by how much. With almost 1,000 product benchmarks already in its data, this kind of analysis is possible. It should be done, and matched up with existing low-income efficiency programs, before this rule is finalized.

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Climate resilience is treated as an afterthought. The report barely mentions how efficiency standards help the power grid cope with extreme heat, and treats an estimated 481 million cubic metres of water savings by 2050 as just a cost-benefit number, rather than connecting it to drought protection in places like the Prairies and southern BC. These impacts hit low-income and rural households hardest. We recommend the final report draw this connection clearly.

How the numbers are calculated matters for fairness. Change a couple of technical assumptions, such as how future costs are valued and how carbon pollution is priced, and the \$26.7 billion in benefits drops to under \$10 billion. Valuing today's costs over tomorrow's, for generations who will feel climate change more than we do, is itself a fairness question. We recommend the government explain clearly how it arrived at these numbers and confirm it is using the latest federal guidance.

Recommendation: We support Amendment 19's overall goals, but urge the government to publish a plain breakdown of who wins and loses, by income and by renter versus owner, and to pair the new standards with financial support for the households and products most likely to lose out. That is how Amendment 19 can deliver real fairness, not just savings on paper.

Implementation, compliance and enforcement, and service standards section comment

CELA and LIEN support the compliance and enforcement framework proposed for Amendment 19, including third-party verification, mandatory reporting, marketplace monitoring, inspections, audits and product testing. Strong enforcement is essential if consumers are actually going to see the benefits of minimum standards.

Enforcement matters even more from an energy poverty perspective. When non-compliant products stay on the market, consumers end up paying for it through higher bills, and low-income households have the least room to absorb that cost. Making sure products actually meet the standards is not just a compliance issue. It is a matter of consumer protection and affordability.

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CELA and LIEN recommend NRCan's compliance monitoring go beyond just checking technical requirements. It should also track whether the regulations are actually working: real energy savings, effects on household costs, product availability and pricing, and fair access, including for low-income households and renters, who often rely on older or cheaper appliances.

We also encourage NRCan to keep an eye on less-efficient products still being sold during transition periods, and to make sure implementation timelines do not unnecessarily delay access to more efficient products. Where compliant products are already on the market, NRCan should encourage early compliance so households can start saving sooner.

Cooling-equipment standards deserve particular attention here too. As extreme heat and cooling demand increase, efficient air conditioners and heat pumps can help households stay safe indoors while keeping costs and grid demand down. Low-income households are often the least able to absorb rising cooling costs, which makes efficient cooling technology important for both affordability and resilience.

Finally, CELA and LIEN recommend that consumer complaint mechanisms be easy to use, and that compliance and enforcement results be reported publicly, including products tested, compliance rates, violations and enforcement actions. Transparent reporting would strengthen accountability and help make sure Amendment 19's expected energy, affordability and climate benefits are actually delivered.

NRCan should periodically assess the distributional impacts of the Energy Efficiency Regulations, including whether low-income households and renters are realizing a proportionate share of energy and cost savings.

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Sincerely,

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