

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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McGill University and Energize Bridgewater release report on energy needs, housing, and well-being

BRIDGEWATER, NS—New research in Bridgewater shows that 2 out of 5 households are struggling to pay home heating and electricity bills. A team of researchers from McGill University's Department of Geography surveyed Bridgewater residents in the spring of 2022. Professor Mylene Riva, Canada Research Chair in Housing, Community and Health led the research project. Their new report focuses on energy needs, housing, and well-being in the Town of Bridgewater. This report is a first step to measure the impacts of *Energize Bridgewater's* efforts to help residents reduce their home energy costs.

The *Energy Needs, Housing, and Well-Being in the Town of Bridgewater* report presents a clear picture of the energy poverty situation in Bridgewater. There are few other studies in Canada that reached as many local residents as this one.

A household may be in energy poverty if they cannot afford to keep their home warm or cool enough, or power appliances. The challenges that Bridgewater is facing are not unique. Households across Canada experience energy poverty. The real difference is that the Town of Bridgewater has stepped up to do something about it.

Researchers found that 38% of households in Bridgewater are facing energy poverty. These households are devoting a large share of their income to home energy costs. This high number is motivating the Town of Bridgewater to support households with home energy upgrades. Insulation, draft-proofing, heat pumps, and other upgrades can reduce household energy costs by up to half. Energize Bridgewater is making it easier and more affordable for residents to carry out these upgrades.

Energize Bridgewater is an ambitious and unique community-wide program with the goal to reduce the energy poverty rate by 20% by 2026. Based on surveying residents in Bridgewater, the report describes that:

- 20% reported difficulty affording to keep their home warm enough;
- 35% said they had to juggle bills to pay for utilities, and 23% said it was hard to pay utility bills on time;

- 32% reported cutting back on groceries to pay for power and heating in the past year;
- 21% reported shivering in their home over the past winter because of the cold; 8% reported seeing their breath inside; and 12% reported trouble sleeping due to the cold.

This report highlights the extent of energy poverty in Bridgewater. It creates a baseline of data to compare before and after Energize Bridgewater is fully implemented. The partnership with McGill researchers will help *Energize Bridgewater* know if they have met their targets or not. Over the next few years, McGill researchers will assess the impacts of *Energize Bridgewater* on health and well-being. Researchers will look for community perspectives from residents entering *Energize Bridgewater* programming.

The report is released in partnership with the Town of Bridgewater. Meghan Doucette, Planner I at the Town of Bridgewater says “We are really grateful to have this research partnership with McGill University and Energize Bridgewater. We’re a small town working on a big project, and we rely on our partnerships to add capacity to our program.”

[Download the complete report.](#)

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