

## Interview Guide – Exploring Energy Challenges and Opportunities in Community Housing

RESEARCHERS: DR. RUNA DAS, DR. ROBERT NEWELL, JOFRI ISSAC

### SECTION A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE TENANTS

**Interviewer:** *With the following questions, we hope to gain a better understanding of your relationship with energy and services related to energy use, such as heating, cooling, lighting, hot water use, cooking, internet, and use of appliances such as a refrigerator, washer, dryer, TV, computers, etc. With these questions we hope to encourage open dialogue about energy-related challenges and opportunities for energy transitions in community housing. We define energy transition as the broad shift in technologies and behaviours associated with moving from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. We define well-being to include both physical and mental health dimensions.*

*The discussions will be flexible and conversational, allowing participants to share their experiences and perspectives freely.*

#### Incidence, Experience, Coping – humanizing and describing

(1) What would you say are the most important uses of energy for you in your household and day-to-day living?

- Probe: if you lost your access to energy, what do you think would be the most difficult challenges faced by your household?

(2) How adequate is your current level of energy to meet your household's needs, comfort, and well-being?

- Probe: would you use more energy if you could? If yes, what for? And why can't you?
- [Only use the following probe if it's not otherwise possible to elicit concrete answers]
- Probe: would you like to keep it warmer or cooler? Have the lights on more? Use your appliances more or use more appliances, for instance the oven?

[(3) *Follow-up to (2), ask only if any difficulties with energy use have been revealed: What do you do to cope with those difficulties (refer specifically to the difficulties mentioned in answer to the previous question)?*

- Probe: cutting back on food, cutting back on use of appliances, wearing extra layers, heating only part of the home, budgeting?
- Probe: support from friends or family members?
- Probe: what coping strategies are used by other family members?]

[(4) *Follow-up to (2) and (3), again ask only if any difficulties with energy use have been revealed: How have these difficulties affected your life?*

- Probe: do they make a difference to your daily routine?]

(5) On a typical day, what do you do to reduce or minimize your energy use?

- Probe: set temperature points, lights on and off, use of appliances?
- Probe: do you make conscious efforts to save energy or to pay less in energy bills?

(6) What other reasons (if any) do you reduce or minimize energy use, aside from saving money?

- Probe: Do environmental concerns factor into your decisions for reducing energy use? Why or why not?

(7) If you pay for your energy: how carefully do you read your energy bills?

- Probe: how do your energy bills influence your energy use?
- Probe: do your energy bills make you nervous?

Vulnerabilities – e.g., socio-demographics, disabilities, health, building conditions; possible determinants of energy poverty

(8) Do you believe that your household uses more energy than other households to support your needs? Why or why not?

- [Use probes only if no clear answer is forthcoming – don't put words in people's mouths]
- Probe: work from home?
- Probe: children?
- Probe: energy-related health issues?
- Probe: mental-health issues?

(9) What would improve the quality of your home?

- Probe: does your home feel drafty? Can you feel cold air coming in from doors or windows?
- Probe: is your heating system efficient?
- Probe: do you use old or defective appliances?
- Probe: have you considered moving to another home? If yes, why?

[(10) *Follow-up to (9), What are the top three changes you would like to see in your building to improve well-being and energy efficiency?*]

(11) How well would your building and energy infrastructure serve you in terms of your health and safety in extreme heat or cold weather events?

- Probe: is your building ready for climate change?
- Probe: is your building ready for extreme hot weather?

#### Neighbourhood comfort & aesthetics

(12) Do you find your neighbourhood to be uncomfortably hot or cold when you step outside? If so, please explain how and when it feels uncomfortable.

(13) How pleasant do you find your neighbourhood to be in terms of aesthetics and how it looks? What do you like about it, and what don't you like about?

#### Strategies to assist with challenges

(14) If you have problems with your home/dwelling, do you talk to your landlord or the building managers about it? Why or why not?

- Probe: how good is your building people with fixing problems or making repairs?

### **Section B: Interview Guide for the Staff and Maintenance Personnel**

***Interviewer:** With the following questions, we hope to gain a better understanding of your views on energy and services related to energy use, such as heating, cooling, lighting, hot water use, cooking, etc., in your building. With these questions we hope to encourage open dialogue about energy-related challenges and opportunities for energy transitions in community housing. We define energy transition as the broad shift in technologies and behaviours associated with moving from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.*

*The discussions will be flexible and conversational, allowing participants to share their experiences and perspectives freely.*

(1) Which uses of energy in the building are most important for daily activities and building operations?

- Probe: Which energy needs, such as heating, hot water, lighting, or appliances, are most essential?

(2) Are there any energy-related issues, such as heating or insulation problems? If yes, how do they affect people living and working in the building?

- Probe: Do they cause discomfort, complaints, extra workload, or stress?

(3) What challenges do you face in maintaining or upgrading these energy uses or systems?

(4) How does the surrounding neighbourhood increase or address energy efficiency challenges for your building? Would your energy challenges lessen if your building was located in a different neighbourhood (why or why not)?

(5) How does your neighbourhood compare to other neighbourhoods in the region in terms of energy efficiency? What neighbourhood stands out to you as a leader in energy efficiency and innovation?

(6) Have you encountered barriers when trying to access funding or programs for energy retrofits or upgrades?

- Probe: What difficulties, if any, have you experienced with funding applications, information access, or coordination efforts?

(7) What changes, resources, or partnerships would help you better address energy-related problems in the building?