



The seasonal bulletin of the Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN)

Volume 4, No.2, Winter/Spring 2010

- **OTF funding for LIEN**

LIEN is delighted to have received another multi-year, province-wide grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation! Our aim over the next 2 ½ years is to ensure that low-income consumers have optimal access to energy conservation/efficiency and assistance programs and to build local community capacity to reduce energy poverty.

- **2010 Annual Conference**

The 2010 LIEN annual conference, ***“Forging Ahead: Shaping Ontario’s Low-Income Energy Future”***, will be held on Wednesday, May 26 at the Oakham House, Ryerson University, Toronto. The aim of the conference is to update participants on the status of low-income energy programs in the province, provide an overview of LIEN’s recent efforts to reduce energy poverty, and obtain feedback for the development of a Train the Trainer manual.

There is no charge to attend the conference and the agenda will be very useful for connecting income security, energy poverty, and energy sustainability issues. For more information, including registration and the agenda, please visit the LIEN website.

- **OEB LEAP (Low-Income Energy Assistance Program) initiative halted!**

On September 8, 2009, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure advised the OEB of the government’s plan to develop a province-wide integrated program for low-income energy consumers. In light of these plans, the Minister requested that the Board not proceed with implementation of the framework for low-income energy consumers in advance of a ministerial direction. The Minister further indicated that the Ministry, in the development of its program, would build upon the work the Board has undertaken to date. LIEN is keenly awaiting an announcement by the Energy Ministry of their province-wide energy strategy, expected to be released this Spring.

- **Bill 235, *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2009***

This bill was introduced in the Ontario legislature on December 9, 2009 and debated over five months. It sets out the government’s framework for the installation of smart meters in multi-residential buildings and the individual metering of electricity service for each suite. The proposed legislation also provides greater protection for residential consumers with respect to unfair business practices (e.g. hidden contract costs, excessive cancellation fees) when contracting for electricity and natural gas supply with retailers and marketers. Bill 235 enables the Ontario Energy Board to "crack-down" on retailers and marketers that violate new conduct rules.

LIEN submitted written comments through the Environmental Registry during the public consultation on the proposed legislation. At the March 2010 public hearings on Bill 235, LIEN

made an oral deputation, urging the Ontario government to make amendments that would provide for: termination energy retail contracts with no penalty fee for low-income consumers; waiving of security deposits for low-income consumers, and a winter disconnection moratorium for low-income consumers. LIEN also requested that the government review whether suite metering can meet the energy conservation, peak demand reduction and GHG emission reduction goals expected from the multi-residential rental sector. We recommended that neutral studies be undertaken on how optimal energy use reductions in this sector can be best achieved without increasing financial burdens on tenants.

- **Green Energy Act assessment for low-income conservation programs; Minister's March 31, 2010 directive to OEB**

The **Green Energy Act** established a new framework for electricity conservation and demand management in Ontario. The Minister of Energy signed the long-awaited Directive on conservation and demand management (CDM) to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) on March 31, 2010. The Directive directs the OEB to specify reductions in electricity consumption and reductions in peak electricity demand to be met through CDM programs (including low-income programs) as a condition of each Local Distribution Company's (LDC) licence. Each LDC must achieve its CDM targets over the four-year period beginning January 1, 2011.

- **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario**

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) is the province's independent environmental watchdog. Appointed by the Legislative Assembly, the ECO is tasked with monitoring and reporting on compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights, and the government's success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and in achieving greater energy conservation in Ontario.

LIEN has met with the ECO and asked him to report separately on low-income energy conservation in his annual reports and on whether the government has established annual targets specific to low-income sector. It is imperative that the **Green Energy Act** provisions dealing with low-income energy conservation build on the principles developed in the OEB's LEAP multi-sector Conservation Working Group. The ECO should report on achievement of those accepted principles in new programs and implementation.

LIEN Currents is issued seasonally by the Low-Income Energy Network for members and others interested in solutions to energy poverty in Ontario. For more information, contact the LIEN Coordinator at bhanjiz@lao.on.ca or 416-597-5855 ext. 5167 or toll-free at 1-866-245-4182 ext. 5167. You can also visit our website at www.lowincomeenergy.ca

LIEN would like to express its appreciation to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for supporting this initiative

