



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

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- **Energy Minister gives “green” light to low-income energy programs**

LIEN is pleased that Energy and Infrastructure Minister Brad Duguid issued a letter on July 5, 2010 to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), requesting it to resume work on a province-wide strategy to help low-income consumers reduce their energy consumption and costs. The Minister also sent a companion letter to the Ontario Power Authority (OPA), directing it to roll out an electricity conservation and demand management program targeted specifically to low-income consumers.

The OEB was planning to move forward with new support programs under their Low-Income Energy Program (LEAP) initiative by early 2010, but put those plans on hold in September 2009, pending expected ministerial direction. LEAP had three components: more flexible customer service rules, emergency financial assistance, and conservation. LIEN participated in the two LEAP implementation working groups and anticipates that the OEB will build on the guiding principles developed in the groups for effective programs.

The new programs are expected to be in place by January 2011, but LIEN believes some protections, such as improved customer service rules and emergency assistance for the upcoming heating season, should be implemented earlier.

- **OPA’s “Low-Income Consumer Conservation Offerings”**

LIEN participated in the Ontario Power Authority’s (OPA) consultation session held on August 19, 2010 to review, and provide feedback on, the suite of proposed offerings for low-income consumers. LIEN subsequently provided written comments on the OPA’s proposed program, emphasizing that what is needed is a permanent, adequately-funded energy conservation programs for low-income consumers, with targets for the number of homes to be retrofitted annually. Such programs should be available at no cost to eligible participants and be equitably accessible province-wide and be consistent with the principles developed by the OEB’s LEAP Conservation Working Group. We also stressed that there must be clarity about who-does-what on energy conservation in the province in order to avoid further delays in assisting low-income households, the sector of Ontarians most in need of reducing their energy costs.

- **LIEN’s Fall Webinar**

LIEN invites you to participate in a webinar hosted by CLEONet on Wednesday, October 20 from 1.00 p.m. – 2.30 p.m. LIEN’s focus is on building the capacity of its network members and other organizations to become “experts” or “resource people” on low-income energy issues in their communities. To facilitate this, LIEN is in the process of developing an Energy Poverty Training Manual/Toolkit.

The aim of the webinar will be to:

1. Introduce key concepts of the manual so as to enable us to develop a draft based on feedback
2. Enable participants to highlight issues relevant to their organizations or communities so that they are reflected in the manual

Space is limited so register now! For further details, including registration, please visit <http://www.cleonet.ca/events/1666>

- **LIEN regional workshop in Kingston**

LIEN invites you to attend a regional workshop in Kingston on Wednesday, November 10, 2010. This FREE workshop offers great networking opportunities, activities, and an opportunity to provide feedback on LIEN's draft Energy Poverty Training Manual/Toolkit.

The workshop will be facilitated by Barb De Ruyter and hosted by the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul.

Workshop participants may come from a wide range of experience and organizations. Ideally they will include:

- Staff or community members who are well-positioned to train others in using the toolkit and who also want to be better able to assist low-income consumers in their own communities
- Individuals who are actively involved in energy awareness and conservation campaigns and want to explore certain topics in greater depth
- Low-income individuals who, having experienced energy poverty, can offer insight into what they might find useful in a toolkit

The workshop and subsequent manual will participants to:

- Provide up-to-date and targeted advice on energy poverty to low-income households, groups and agencies across Ontario in order to raise awareness
- Provide energy efficiency advice and conservation tips to encourage the reduction in energy consumption (and therefore a reduction in energy bills)
- Support groups and agencies that provide advice to low-income energy consumers so as to ensure maximum take-up of available programs

For more information and to register, please visit the LIEN website.

- **CAMPUT**

Two representatives from LIEN's steering committee attended the 2010 annual conference of the Canadian Association of Members of Public Utility Tribunals (CAMPUT) which was held in Montreal, Quebec from May 2 to 5. At this event, LIEN represented the interests of low-income consumers among a sea of analysts, economists, and utility companies and raised awareness of the fact that energy is a basic need and therefore needs to be affordable for everyone, especially low-income consumers. We engaged and challenged those experts in the field to come up with innovative ways to keep energy costs low despite the push to start charging the "true" cost of energy.

CAMPUT is a non-profit organization of federal, provincial, and territorial boards and commissions which are responsible for the regulation of the electric, water, gas, and pipeline utilities in Canada. The organization's purpose is to improve public utility regulation, and the education and training of its members. LIEN's presence was sponsored through CAMPUT's Community Fund program. The program funds the attendance at the conference by organizations and individuals who would not otherwise be able to attend. They give voice to concerns and perspectives which utility regulators from across the country may not often hear. The theme for this year's conference was sustainable regulation.

- **Spreading the low-income energy message beyond our border**

LIEN was asked to present at the LIFE (Low-Income Forum on Energy) conference on May 19 in Albany, New York. LIFE is a similar entity to LIEN – it brings together organizations and individuals committed to addressing the challenges and opportunities facing low-income New Yorkers as they seek safe, affordable and reliable energy. They are sponsored by the New York State Public Service Commission and underwritten by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). LIEN was able to share its successes and highlight Ontario's strategy to address energy poverty.

- **The Power of Unlikely Partnerships**

LIEN was invited to make a presentation at the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN) annual conference on May 27, 2010 in Toronto. This year's theme is the *Power of Unlikely Partnerships*. LIEN's session focused on unlikely partnerships and explored the benefits, opportunities and challenges in successfully working together with unusual bedfellows. LIEN regularly crosses issues and sectors – energy, environment, poverty, and tenant rights – offering an opportunity for exciting conversation and learning.

The Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN) is a membership group of private, community, public and corporate foundations, and government and corporate funding programs that give grants in support of the Canadian environment.

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

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