



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

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- **Low-income Energy Efficiency pilot program launched**

LIEN welcomed the launch of the Ontario Power Authority's (OPA) \$2.9 million pilot program to support energy conservation in Ontario's private low-income housing sector. The Energy Efficiency Assistance Program for Houses targets electrically-heated single, semi-detached and row houses and includes: an energy audit, installation of energy-efficient measures (at no charge to the tenant or homeowner), education and outreach, and monitoring and verification. The pilot program offers extended measures such as draft-proofing, insulation and fridge replacement, as LIEN had advocated.

The OPA has contracted with EnviroCentre to deliver the pilot program to 300 Ottawa-area households and with Green Communities Canada (GCC) to deliver the pilot program to 1,100 households in 15 other communities across Ontario. The Green Communities Canada pilot launch took place on January 25, 2007 at Queen's Park. EnviroCentre launched their pilot last November in Ottawa. Interested applicants should contact EnviroCentre (613-580-2582) or GCC (1-888-661-0000) for more information.

LIEN anticipates that the pilot will lay the groundwork for a permanent, ongoing program that will be available and delivered in all communities across the province to eligible low-income households.

- **Federal energy retrofit plan shuts out low-income consumers**

On January 21, 2007, the Conservative government unveiled a \$220 million ecoENERGY Retrofit program that will be launched in the spring. This program is a variation of the previous Liberal government's EnerGuide for Houses program which the Conservatives cancelled last May. Under the retrofit program, the government expects to pay homeowners average grants of \$1,000 per single property if it is made more energy efficient. Low-income Canadians, who have the most to gain through renovations to improve energy efficiency, have effectively been denied access to home energy retrofits and bill savings under this program. To qualify for the grants, homeowners must first foot the bill for the energy audits and pay for the renovations and retrofits. This upfront cost is unaffordable to low-income households and those on fixed incomes.

- **Electricity Smart Metering in multi-residential rental sector on hold**

The new *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA), which came into effect on January 31, 2007, contains provisions that allow landlords to install Smart Meters in multi-residential buildings so that they can require tenants to pay for their individual electricity use in their unit despite leases stating otherwise. The RTA also allows landlords to "ratio bill" electricity or other utilities in smaller buildings with no more than six units (i.e. dividing or apportioning the cost of utilities among tenants). These sections of the RTA are not yet in force. The provincial government must develop regulations that will govern rent reductions and energy conservation obligations of landlords when the utility costs are removed from a tenant's rent and the tenant takes on the responsibility for paying for the utility service directly. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be consulting with the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (one of LIEN's founding members) as the regulations are developed.

- **OEB's jurisdiction to consider Ontario Home Energy Affordability Program for low-income households**

LIEN intervened in the Union Gas 2007 Rates and the Enbridge Gas 2007 Rates proceedings at the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to request that a rate affordability program for low-income consumers be considered. The Board dismissed LIEN's evidence and argument on the proposed program in the Union Gas 2007 Rates case because of procedural issues. In the matter of the Enbridge Gas 2007 Rates proceeding, the OEB has yet to reach a decision on its jurisdiction to consider and implement rate affordability programs. However, the Board has decided that the Enbridge Gas 2007 Rates proceeding is not the most suitable for this issue to be heard. The decision on jurisdiction will follow at a later date.

- **LIEN calls for deeper measures in low-income natural gas DSM programs**

From 2007 to 2009, Union Gas and Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. are each spending at least \$1.3 million annually on demand-side management (DSM) programs at no cost for low-income consumers. LIEN members were invited by both of the gas distribution utilities to provide input on low-income DSM program design in advance of the filing of the DSM plans with the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), and also submitted comments to the OEB on the low-income aspects of the plans.

At our consultation sessions with the gas distribution utilities, LIEN recommended the delivery of low-income DSM programs with energy audits and the installation of extended energy saving measures – such as weatherization and replacement of energy inefficient appliances and heating equipment – that would provide the benefits of deeper reductions in energy use and costs for low-income consumers, as well as reduced greenhouse gas emissions. As a resource/model for these types of extended energy savings measures, we asked the utilities to consider LIEN's **Low-Income Energy Efficiency Program** design described in our December 2004 report which is available on our website at:

<http://www.lowincomeenergy.ca/A55AB4/lien.nsf/All//designee>.

Enbridge Gas Distribution is preparing to deliver a Low-Income Weatherization Program for over 350 households annually, with measures such as attic and wall insulation, caulking, and door and window weather-stripping. Also, Union Gas and Enbridge Gas Distribution each plan to offer a program to install low-flow showerheads, pipe insulation, faucet aerators and programmable thermostats.

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

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