



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

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- **LIEN on-the-road - raising public awareness in Southwestern Ontario**

As part of its mission to increase awareness of low-income energy issues, LIEN regularly makes presentations in communities, and to organizations, across Ontario. Through this outreach, direct service providers, community organizations and community legal clinics are better equipped to help low-income people who are having trouble paying their energy bills, and to join in advocacy for a comprehensive, long-term, environmentally sustainable strategy to address energy poverty.

On March 22nd, LIEN's "*Closing the energy affordability gap: a comprehensive approach to reducing energy poverty in Ontario*" presentation was made at the Southwest Region community legal clinics' Spring training in London. The presentation reviewed what energy conservation and emergency financial assistance is currently available to help low-income people reduce their energy use and cost, and what more needs to be done to close the policy and program gaps. The session ended with a discussion of simple steps that local activists could take in their own communities keep up the pressure on decision-makers to take action, for example, writing a letter to their MPP or writing an opinion editorial for their local newspaper.

- **"Energy GreenBoxes" pilot program through food banks**

On February 5, 2007, Friends of the Earth-Canada and the Ontario Association of Food Banks launched a pilot project which delivers free "Energy GreenBoxes" to low-income households in the Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas service areas across the province. The Energy GreenBox contains rolls of insulating foam to seal doors and windows, draft excluders for power outlets, two compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) along with energy conservation tips and an offer for a complimentary membership in Friends of the Earth.

- **Energy efficiency rebates for newly-built affordable housing**

A \$3.7 million program to encourage the use of energy efficient products in the construction of new housing built under the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program was announced on February 20, 2006. The new program is funded by the Ontario Power Authority (\$2.4 million) and Natural Resources Canada (\$1.3 million). Phase One of the Program, which will target up to 5,000 affordable housing units throughout Ontario, will offer affordable housing providers up to \$850 per unit to help offset the cost of purchasing energy efficient products such as ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances, lamps and lighting fixtures, and heating and ventilation equipment, including furnaces, boilers, pumps, fans and motors.

- **Energy audit rebates announced in 2007 Ontario Budget**

To encourage homeowners to undertake energy audits, the Ontario government announced in the 2007 Budget that it will provide \$24 million over four years to help lower the cost of a home energy audit by up to \$150. This new initiative complements the recently announced federal ecoENERGY Retrofit Program, which provides financial support and information for energy retrofits in homes, as well as in small buildings and industries. Unfortunately, this will not benefit low-income households since they are unable to afford either the energy audit or the retrofits. The typical low-income family in Ontario has only a \$200 "cushion" to buffer

income interruptions or deal with unexpected expenditures. The federal Conservative government cancelled the national EnerGuide for Low-Income Households (EGLIH) program in May 2006.

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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