



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

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- **LIEN responds to decision that OEB does not have jurisdiction to order low-income rates**

As reported in a previous *LIEN Currents* bulletin, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) was considering whether it had the jurisdiction to implement rate affordability programs for low-income consumers. The Board released its decision on April 26, 2007. The issue came before the OEB as a result of LIEN's intervention in the Enbridge Gas Distribution 2007 Rates proceeding and the submission of LIEN's proposal for an **Ontario Home Energy Affordability Program** for low-income consumers.

The majority of the panel found that the OEB does not have the jurisdiction. However, one member of the three-member panel wrote a dissenting decision, finding that the Board does have the "jurisdiction to approve special rates for low-income consumers in appropriate cases". OEB staff also took the position in their submissions to the Board that the OEB did have authority to implement some form of rate affordability assistance programs for low-income consumers, but were reluctant to speculate just how far that authority might extend.

In response, LIEN is appealing the OEB's decision to Divisional Court. LIEN has also sent a letter to the Minister of Energy, asking that he issue a directive to the OEB to hold a generic hearing on the impact of energy prices on low-income and vulnerable consumers. LIEN wants the OEB at such a generic hearing to consider and implement solutions including low-income rate assistance. The Quebec government issued a similar directive in August 2006 to the Régie de l'énergie (Quebec's OEB equivalent).

- **Register now for June 20<sup>th</sup> LIEN annual conference**

LIEN's third Annual Conference is being held jointly with McQuesten Legal & Community Services, Hamilton Mountain Legal & Community Services, and Dundurn Community Legal Services. This all-day event will take place on Wednesday, June 20<sup>th</sup> in Hamilton at McMaster University Downtown Campus for Continuing Education, 50 Main Street East, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

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. Look for the conference agenda on the LIEN website – it will be available shortly.

- **Low-income consumer and environmental issues on agenda at energy regulators national conference**

Two representatives from LIEN's steering committee attended the 2007 annual conference of the Canadian Association of Members of Public Utility Tribunals (CAMPUT) which was held in Kelowna, B.C from April 29 to May 2. 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. This year's conference featured a session on energy price impacts on consumers that highlighted the recent Ontario Energy Board decision in LIEN's case on jurisdiction to consider and implement low-income rate assistance. A prominent topic in many of the presentations at the CAMPUT conference was climate change, the environmental impact of energy use, and who will be paying for the cost of initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- **LIEN participating in development of OPA's Multifamily Buildings Program to reduce energy use**

The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) is consulting with LIEN and other stakeholders in the development of its Multifamily Buildings Program to reduce energy demand and consumption of all existing multi-residential buildings with six or more housing units. The three year (2008-2010) Multifamily Buildings Program is part of the OPA's overall strategic objectives to create conservation and demand management programs that promote a culture of conservation in Ontario. LIEN representatives attended an all-day workshop on May 11<sup>th</sup> that focused on strategic design. A second workshop scheduled for June will focus on the delivery and implementation framework for the program.

*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](mailto:bhanjiz@lao.on.ca) or 416-597-5855 ext. 5167. You can also visit our website at [www.lowincomeenergy.ca](http://www.lowincomeenergy.ca)

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