



# Low-Income Energy Network

---

For immediate release:

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

## **Cooling government enthusiasm for low-income energy consumers' programs?**

**(Toronto)** The Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN) is calling for a permanent energy rate affordability program for Ontario's poorest households as members from across the province gather tomorrow for their annual conference.

"Low-income consumers have been waiting too long for an energy poverty solution. They do not have the resources to reduce their energy use or meet their basic energy needs, including healthy home temperatures during dangerously hot summer days and freezing winter nights," said Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA). "We urge the Energy Minister to build on the significant progress made at the OEB's LEAP Conservation Working Group and put into place a province-wide multi-fuel low-income conservation program."

In September 2009 the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure advised the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) that the provincial government was developing a new integrated program for low-income energy 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 pending expected ministerial direction.

As energy costs continue to rise and looming summer temperatures threaten to impact the health of people who cannot afford to escape the heat, LIEN's members are concerned that low-income consumers are still waiting for the sustainable supports needed to help manage their utility bills and pay for other basic essentials such as rent, food, transportation and medicine.

"The need for an effective, adequately funded emergency energy assistance program is critical to avoid homelessness for vulnerable households facing short-term financial crises", said Jennifer Lopinski, the Emergency Home Energy program administrator with A Place Called Home in the Municipality of Kawartha Lakes. "Many existing low-income financial assistance programs are not available province-wide and funds are often insufficient to meet the need."

With the province now taking the lead on developing an integrated low-income program, LIEN asks that the Energy Minister seriously review the need to include a low-income energy rate affordability program as an important component of a comprehensive approach to reducing energy poverty in Ontario.

-30-

**For further information:**

Zee Bhanji, LIEN coordinator  
416-597-5855 ext. 5167

[www.lowincomeenergy.ca](http://www.lowincomeenergy.ca)

**Low-income energy consumers will be available for comment.**

---

**c/o Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)**  
425 Adelaide St. West, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Toronto, ON M5V 3C1  
Phone: 416-597-5855 ext. 5167 1-866-245-4182 Fax: 416-597-5821