



# Low-Income Energy Network

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

**(Toronto)** The Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN) is pleased that Energy and Infrastructure Minister Brad Duguid issued a letter yesterday 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.

“This is good news for low-income consumers who have been waiting too long for a solution to energy poverty. They do not have the resources to pay for energy-savings retrofits, and are seriously challenged in meeting 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), a LIEN steering committee member. “We’re also pleased that the OEB and OPA have been asked to coordinate on the delivery of the conservation programs by gas and electricity distributors.”

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 last September 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 for effective programs.

“The need for an adequately funded emergency energy assistance program is critical to avoid homelessness for vulnerable households facing short-term financial crises”, said Jennifer Lopinski, LIEN steering committee member and the Emergency Home Energy program administrator with A Place Called Home in the Municipality of Kawartha Lakes. “It’s encouraging that the Energy Minister has asked the OEB to consider increasing the original funding allocation for the assistance program previously announced under LEAP.”

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.

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**For further information:**

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