



## **Low-Income Energy Network**

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**For Immediate Release**

### **Electricity Price Hikes Will Hit Poor Hardest Heating is not a luxury, says Low-Income Energy Network**

**TORONTO-** Today, the Low Income Energy Network (LIEN) called on the provincial government to introduce province-wide energy conservation and bill assistance programs for low-income households in response to the announcement of higher prices for electricity.

“Heating is not a luxury and this price hike will hit the poorest hardest” said Michael Shapcott of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. “No one should have to choose between eating and heating.”

Low-income households spend a much higher proportion of the income on energy than other households, but only use about 5% of all the electricity consumed in Ontario. Formed in response to last year’s price hikes, LIEN is a network of over 45 anti-poverty, affordable housing and environmental organizations that has proposed a comprehensive approach to safeguarding low-income consumers access to energy as a basic necessity. LIEN’s approach includes conservation programs to make low-income consumers’ homes more energy-efficient, special rates for low-income consumers, education programs, and emergency assistance where necessary.

“We are calling on the McGuinty government to protect low-income consumers’ access to this basic necessity” said Mary Todorow of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. “The government must move quickly to make low-income consumers’ homes more energy efficient and with bill support programs to ensure that no one loses their home due to high energy prices.”

The new pricing scheme also includes different prices depending on when the power is used. These prices will affect consumers with the so-called ‘smart meters’ that the province intends to make mandatory at a cost of \$3 - \$4 per month per customer. LIEN is concerned with this new pricing scheme because, as the Ontario Energy Board report on smart meters acknowledged, anyone who has electric heat will be hit hardest by the new time-of-use pricing plan. Electricity prices in the winter between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. (when heating is most needed) will be 9.3 cents/kWh, compared to 5.0 cents/kWh for the first 1000 kWh/month and 5.8 cents/kWh for the rest in non smart-metered homes. Statistics Canada data gathered by LIEN shows that the poorest income quintile are almost twice as likely as the provincial average to have electric heat.

“We need smart conservation programs, not smart meters” said Keith Stewart of the Toronto Environmental Alliance. “Low-income housing is the least energy efficient because either their owners don’t have the resources to fix them up or, in the case of renters, their landlords won’t fix them up because they can pass on higher energy costs to the tenant. The targeted conservation program we have proposed to the government would reduce energy use for low-income households by about a third and permanently reduce both energy bills and pollution.”

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