



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

Volume 1, No. 2, June 2006

- **LIEN/AHAC 2006 Annual Conference presentations available online**

Over 90 participants attended LIEN's 2nd Annual Conference which was held jointly with the Affordable Housing Action Committee of Peterborough (AHAC), and co-sponsored by the Peterborough Community Legal Centre (PCLC) and the Community Counselling & Resource Centre (CCRC). While most of the participants were from Toronto and Peterborough, there were also individuals and representatives from organizations from Belleville, Kingston, Parry Sound, Elliot Lake and Hamilton. Evaluations received from attendees were almost unanimous in stating that they found the conference interesting and very helpful, and that it provided a good overview of the links between affordable housing, energy use and the environment. Participants also indicated they would use the information and networking from the conference in their own local community work on low-income energy issues. The presentations are available on the LIEN website.

- **OEB leaves door open for future consideration of an Ontario Energy Affordability Program for Low-Income Households**

LIEN filed a proposal for a ratepayer-funded **Ontario Home Energy Affordability Program** as evidence at the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) in the Union Gas 2007 Rates proceeding. While the Board panel struck LIEN's evidence, it noted the importance of this policy issue in its written decision:

“The evidence clearly raises policy questions. An issue of this importance demands an appropriate forum. It is not clear at this time what that forum should be, but Board Staff will develop a generic approach to the appropriate forum and timing for the Board's consideration of this important issue.”

LIEN has recommended to the OEB that the forum be a generic proceeding on energy rate affordability and that it be held in the late summer or early fall of 2006 in order to address the needs of low-income consumers before winter.

- **LIEN submits comments for OEB's 1st annual review of LDCs' CDM plan spending**

The OEB is publicly reviewing the first year of spending by electricity local distribution companies (LDCs) on Conservation and Demand Management (CDM) activities. The OEB approved spending of approximately \$163 million, to be invested over three years. Targeted low-income and/or social housing CDM programs have been encouraged by the OEB, but are not mandatory. Just over 30 LDCs have included such programs in their CDM plans, with total spending of approximately \$9 million – and this amount comprises about 5% of the \$163 million total investment in CDM activities. In contrast, utilities in U.S. jurisdictions spend roughly 10% to 15% of their demand-side management (DSM) budgets on low-income programs.

LIEN has submitted comments regarding low-income and/or social housing CDM program spending for the OEB's consideration in its selective audit of the LDCs 2005 annual reports. Our comments included the following:

- More priority needs to be given to the delivery of the targeted low-income and social housing CDM programs as over a third of the LDCs have spent nothing or under-spent their projected budgets for these programs in year-one;
- Need for more transparency in the reports as to the intention and effectiveness of the measures and a further breakdown by category of reported spending; and,
- The Total Resource Cost (TRC) test may be acting as a deterrent the creation and/or delivery of effective low-income programs.

- **OPA/Conservation Bureau issues RFP for Low-Income Single Family Homes Pilot Program**

In the first roll-out of low-income conservation and demand management (CDM) programs beyond the social housing sector, the Conservation Bureau issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide the program design, management and delivery of a Pilot Program for Low-Income Single Family Homes ("Pilot Program"). The Pilot Program is expected to target up to 2,500 electrically heated homes in the province of Ontario and deliver electricity and demand savings in the targeted customer group. The pilot program will adopt a whole-house, comprehensive approach, with a strong resident education piece on energy use. Implementation of the pilot program is expected to begin in August 2006 and run through until June 30, 2007. LIEN continues to have regular contact with Conservation Bureau staff as they develop their programs. For more information, please visit the Conservation Bureau website at: <http://www.conservationbureau.on.ca/>.

LIEN Currents is issued 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

LIEN would like to express its appreciation to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for supporting this initiative

