

May 20, 2009

Kirsten Walli  
Board Secretary  
Ontario Energy Board  
P.O. Box 2319  
2300 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4P 1E

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ONTARIO ENERGY BD

**RE: EB-2008-0150**

**Re: File Number EB-2009-0150**  
**Nominee to Financial Assistance Working Group**

Dear Ms. Walli:

COSTI Immigrant Services wishes to nominate Ms. Carolina Gajardo, Manager, Housing Program to participate in the LEAP Financial Assistance Working Group. COSTI is one of Ontario's largest immigrant and refugee serving agencies. With 16 locations in the Greater Toronto Area, COSTI supports almost 40,000 newcomers per year in all aspects of their settlement process in Canada. COSTI provides settlement counselling, language training, family counselling, employment support services, reception and housing help services. Immigrants and refugees are increasingly represented amongst the poorest populations in Ontario, suffering higher levels of unemployment and poverty than their Canadian-born counterparts. COSTI services provide a holistic approach to overcoming barriers to economic independence and integration. In addition to providing direct services, COSTI is a leader in program development and coordination, needs assessment, public education and policy development on issues affecting newcomers.

#### COSTI's Housing Help Program

Housing Help workers have been advocating for province wide energy assistance initiatives for many years because of their unique *frontline experience* assisting lower income people with housing security and stability issues within a complex system.



Ms. Gajardo is highly knowledgeable on issues of energy for low income earners and the structure and operation of agencies that deliver services to them because of her role at COSTI in the delivery of Share the Warmth and Winter Warmth Programs and other income support programs such as the Rent Bank in an urban setting. In addition she brings the unique needs and perspective of the settlement constituency and suburban Ontario to the table. She has many years of experience building partnerships between communities, various sectors and government institutions and is currently extending her considerable experience in program development and public education.

### **Cost Eligibility**

Our nominee will require cost eligibility as a representative of a not-for-profit organization working within strict budgets. Therefore we have limited resources to cover disbursements such as travel, accommodation, telephone, printing etc in order to participate on this working group. As a result, without OEB cost awards the preparation, attendance and reporting time to participate on the LEAP Financial Assistance Working Group would largely be borne by COSTI Housing Help Centre or the participant herself.

We are very pleased to be able to nominate Ms. Gajardo to participate in a province wide initiative that will work towards sensible solutions to energy poverty, led by the OEB. We look forward to assisting the OEB to develop and deliver this highly anticipated province wide program.

Sincerely,



Josie Di Zio  
Senior Director,  
Planning and Program Development