NFN OW Feedback, Nov 10, 2014

Ontario Low-Income Assistance Strategy Review

**First Nations and Metis Community Questions**

1. **First Nations/Metis Energy Situation**

* What are the issues and concerns with respect to electricity supply and costs for First Nations/Metis communities? How do these impact the ability of some consumers to pay for their electricity use?
* How aware are First Nations/Metis consumers of existing low income energy support programs, and are they effective?
* What are the barriers to First Nations/Metis accessing these programs, and how might they be reduced?

**High costs in the utility such as the delivery charges cost more than the usage**

**Awareness of what program are out there is very minimal. More awareness of what program are available should be at the local OW and ODSP offices.**

1. **Identifying Low-Income Customers**

* What is the appropriate definition of “low income” and should it be the same as existing programs like LEAP?
* What is the best/most effective method to identify those who should be considered “low income” and require assistance?

**Low income people who are on some kind of government benefit**

**Meet the LICO chart with revenue Canada**

1. **Qualifying for the Programs**

* What process should be used for recipients to qualify?
* How often should recipients have to re-apply?

**Income tax verification and should be able to access once a year**

1. **Administering the Programs**

* What’s the best method to deliver the programs?
* What can we learn from how other non-energy low income support programs are delivered?
* How should the programs be reviewed and assessed over time to make sure they are best helping those in need?

**As serious issue come up then the policy of the program should be reviewed to reflect the necessary changes review semi-annually.**

1. **Other Programs/Information**

* Are there other program that might help First Nations/Metis consumers to cope with rising electricity costs (e.g. conservation program to reduce energy use over time)?

**Local OW offices have limited funding to support low income and those families in receipt of OW and ODSP.**

**Any rebates from the government should it be through income tax it should be a direct payment to the individuals utility and not given to the household directly.**