



# Legal Clinic

## OF GUELPH & WELLINGTON COUNTY

The Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County is a free legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario and governed by a Community Board of Directors. We are the community legal clinic for Guelph and Wellington County, including the customers of Centre Wellington Hydro and Hydro One and assist tenants with Housing and Income issues.

At the Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington we know that residents of Wellington County struggling to pay hydro rates. We hear about tenants falling into arrears, or being cut off all together.

We would like you to consider those in our community who are already living precariously; the working poor, and those on social assistance: Ontario Works or Ontario Disability. For many in this group costs associated with shelter make up more than 30 percent of their monthly income. Any increase to this area of their monthly budget means a decrease in other areas of spending – food, clothing, school supplies, medical supports, or what we call basic needs.

Here are some numbers to consider; the maximum shelter allowance for a single person on Ontario Disability is \$489, the maximum for a single person on Ontario Works is \$376. This means this is the maximum amount they receive monthly to cover rent and utilities. There is no money to pay increased hydro! Even many tenants who live in rent geared to income pay hydro separately and increasing hydro costs present a challenge for all tenants, especially those living in rural areas.

The rent for a one bedroom unit in this area most often exceeds \$900 a month. Hydro is typically a separate charge to the tenant. The proposed monthly increase of \$2.55 by C.W hydro may seem insignificant to some, but to those struggling to balance their shelter and basic needs the increase could mean making the decision between staying housed or not having enough for transportation or basic needs. Members of our community living at or below the poverty line will be most affected by these increases. This is not the kind of choices we want people to have to make. We at the Legal Clinic know that not having enough money leads to other problems, including impacts on health. We are calling on the Ontario Energy Board to decline this request for an increase.