

July 25, 2008

Ms Kirsten Walli
Board Secretary
Ontario Energy Board
P.O. Box 2319
2300 Yonge St., 27th floor
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1E4

Dear Ms Walli,

Re: **Consultation on Energy Issues Relating to Low Income Consumers (Board File No.: EB-2008-0150)**

I am writing on behalf of the Income Security Advocacy Centre to advise you that we intend to participate in the above-mentioned consultation process, and in particular wish to attend the stakeholder conference to be held the week of September 22nd.

ISAC is a specialty community legal clinic with a province-wide mandate, funded by Legal Aid Ontario to engage in test case litigation, policy advocacy and community organizing to improve the income security of the province's low-income residents.

ISAC is also a founding member of the Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN), formed in 2004 to raise awareness of the impact of rising energy prices on low-income consumers and to work with policymakers and the utility sectors on solutions to energy poverty. We use the term energy poverty to describe the disproportionate burden of electricity, natural gas and other utility costs on low-income households which reduce the funds available for rent, food, clothing, transportation, medicine and other basic necessities.

ISAC is specifically concerned that rising costs for electricity and gas are eroding the ability of Ontario's low-income community to maintain their housing and feed themselves and their families. People living on social assistance have fixed shelter allowances that have fallen far behind inflation, causing them to spend money needed for food on shelter and energy costs. They also face program rules that have an impact on their ability to take advantage of other government programs and supports which need to be considered in the design of any new rate affordability program.

We need a comprehensive energy poverty strategy in place in the province, comprised of:

- an energy rate affordability program,
- targeted low-income energy conservation/efficiency programs at no-cost to participants, and with as extensive measures as practicable to provide deep reductions in energy use,
- extensive consumer education about energy conservation and available programs to support conservation activities, and
- adequately funded emergency energy assistance to help low-income households in short-term financial crisis.

LIEN's advocacy also includes the promotion of terms and conditions for utility service that are in the best interests of low-income consumers. Such terms and conditions:

- will not add to the service costs, nor penalize low-income consumers who are experiencing payment difficulties,
- will assist low-income consumers in accessing and maintaining essential utility service.

Please be advised that we wish to be considered for cost eligibility for our participation in the stakeholder conference, and will be collaborating with LIEN and the other LIEN steering committee intervenors to minimize duplication.

Yours sincerely,

Original Signed by

Mary E. Marrone
Director of Advocacy & Legal Services
Income Security Advocacy Centre
E-mail: marronem@lao.on.ca
416-597-5820 ext. 5144

