



EB-2008-0150

OEB Consultation on Energy Issues
Relating to Low Income Consumers

Presentation on Topic # 2
OEB Stakeholder Conference
September 22-25 2008
Barb Allen
Manager, Customer programs
Hydro One Networks Inc

Topic # 2

- Are there programs in place now, including emergency assistance programs, to assist low income energy consumers and if so, are there agencies and organizations which currently work with utilities to coordinate to administer these programs. What more, if anything, should be done?

HON Practices & Experience

- Hydro One currently does not have any specific programs that deal with low income consumers
- However, Hydro One has experience in managing a variety of approaches for customers who have difficulty in paying their bills
- This experience may be of value in considering options for developing policies to deal with low income consumers

HON Payment Options

Payment options available for customers having difficulty paying their bills

- Payment arrangements:
 - customers can call us if they are having trouble paying their bill; we will attempt to work out alternative arrangements
 - communicate this to customers in welcome package, and once a year through bill adders
 - More than 82,000 payment arrangements on overdue accounts in 2006; 106,000 in 2007
- Budget billing:
 - reduces seasonal variations in bill amounts

Use of External Agencies

Leveraging assistance from external agencies

- Social Service Agencies (SSA): Ontario Works; ODSP offices; United Way; community groups:
 - these groups acquire funding from various sources: Government, United Way, fundraising/community events, emergency assistance, etc.
 - customers approach the SSA and qualify for the funding they want to help pay the electricity bill.
 - approx 200 groups in our service area; currently process about 5,000 fax transactions/year (does not include phone calls)
 - the SSA will contact the utility to confirm outstanding balance. A consent is required from customer before we can release the information.
 - processes are in place at Customer Communications Centre to provide quick response to customers working with SSAs, and SSA representatives
 - recently enhanced several processes to further improve interactions

New Programs

New program under consideration

- Winter Warmth:
 - a special program by United Way
 - participating utilities provide funding to the United Way, which they distribute to agencies
 - customers access like other SSA support

CDM related programs

CDM programs targeting low-income

- CMHC/NRCan EnerGuide
 - Upgrades and retrofits to qualifying low income households
 - Hydro One funded electricity improvements up to \$3,000
 - Funding also available from CMHC/NRCan for other efficiencies
 - CMHC processed through RRAP program, which includes criteria for low-income status
- OPA Low Income Pilot
 - Awarded to Envirocentre and Green Communities for audits and retrofit to low-income consumers in identified areas
 - Hydro One funded extended measures for customers with electric heat
- First Nations
 - EnerGuide for Houses audits with retrofits where warranted.
 - Hydro One pilot with Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation for basic measure for entire community and comprehensive home efficiency upgrades for electrically heated houses
 - Carried out residential building envelope retrofits in other communities where audits had previously been done but work not completed
- Social Housing, Hydro One program
 - Reduce energy cost of operating social housing buildings; educate tenants
 - 5,000 homes and 100 buildings participating

In Summary

- Customers accessing options and programs are potentially not just low-income; could be other individual situations
- Number of special payment arrangements is growing each year
- High volume requires automating processes
- Groups who establish criteria and qualify low income status exist, and are incorporated into other programs.