

Addressing low income energy issues in Ontario - capacity building for non governmental organizations

A proposal to TAF by CELA and TEA

Background

LIEN is an informal group of 50 ngo's interested in low income energy issues. The groups represent a wide cross-section of environmental, energy, tenant and low income advocacy groups. It was formed to address the April 1, 2004 electricity price hike and its implications for low income families. The group wanted to raise awareness regarding the impacts on low income families and to suggest solutions.

Assistance to low income families, both in paying energy bills and in reducing bills through conservation, is critical to the City of Toronto. TCHC alone houses about 6% of Toronto's population. 14.4% of the province's population is low income and in Toronto about 20% of the population is in this category. This represents a major challenge for assistance as well as a major opportunity for energy savings which in turn will help Toronto to achieve its GHG emission reduction goals.

TEA and CELA are members of LIEN. CELA made a submission to OEB on low income opportunities for energy efficiency in the fall of 2003. TEA and CELA, together, worked on a report submitted to Ministers Duncan and Papatello on April 9th, 2004 in response to a request to CELA from Duncan for recommendations on how to help low income families immediately in paying their electricity bills. Because of the timing of this report due to the urgency placed on it by Duncan, it was not possible to mobilize all the resources of the newly formed LIEN to work on this endeavour. Capacity building of LIEN is needed in order to make it a more responsive and effective unified voice on low income households and energy issues.

CELA, working with TEA, want to build on their past work together and with LIEN. We want to develop a more comprehensive, detailed energy strategy on low income energy assistance and conservation. We want to be able to build capacity among low income groups on these issues. The energy/environmental ngo's need to understand the needs of the other low income advocates and vice versa. Financial support is also need to help the groups organize more effectively and become a long term, sustained voice for low income households on energy issues in Toronto and across Ontario.

Project objectives:

- To build upon the research and recommendations included in TEAs recent report, by identifying a comprehensive set of low income energy efficiency programs.
- To submit a report with recommendations to Ministers Poupatello and Duncan on what low income energy efficiency programs should be implemented for the 2004-2005 heating season in Toronto and elsewhere and which ones should be ready for implementation in 2005-2006 based on the input from the 50 ngo's of LIEN.
- To provide capacity building and organizational support to non governmental organizations in Ontario with an interest in low income energy issues (i.e. environmental/energy groups, low income advocacy groups, tenancy advocacy groups etc) in order to encourage effective, coordinated action by these groups.

Project components:

1. Advisory Group (AG)

- 5-7 key stakeholder organizations (members of LIEN)
- design of outreach/consultation process for wider stakeholder audience
- undertake further research on program options
- recommend comprehensive set of low income energy efficiency programs, based on research and consultation process
- members receive a per diem for their participation on AG

2. Secretariat

- Provide administrative support for Advisory Group
- Arrange logistics outreach/consultation process (e.g. workshop, website, coordination of comment on draft report etc)

3. Outreach & consultation process

- Outreach and consultation mechanisms to encourage discussion among NGOs with an interest in low income energy issues and to solicit feedback on research and recommendations developed by the Advisory group
- A 1 day workshop would be held with the members of LIEN and other interested parties on the draft recommendations on the low income energy efficiency programs to solicit feedback. The workshop will also be used to provide some education and networking opportunities for participants.
- Ongoing communication with LIEN members would be maintained through email and telephone conferences.
- Other Possible mechanisms include: website, discussion forums, and interviews with various LIEN members to identify existing low energy income programs and to obtain feedback on the development of the draft recommendations.

4. Other Funding Sources

- CELA will seek additional funding from the Ministries of Energy and Community and Social Services, and Toronto Hydro.