



# Low-Income Energy Network

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## **Long-Term Energy Plan a positive move, But affordable energy rate program needed to protect the vulnerable**

**(Toronto)** The Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN) strongly supports the government's commitment to energy conservation and renewable energy in the updated Long-Term Energy Plan which was unveiled by Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli yesterday.

"Conservation and efficiency is the fastest and easiest way to meet our energy needs, and cheaper than building new generation. It also reduces our environmental impact, including greenhouse gas emissions," noted Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, a founding member of LIEN. "We welcome the government's effort to develop a culture of conservation, and trust that low-income consumers will have equal opportunities to participate."

While the announcement of on-bill financing for energy efficiency retrofits in the new plan is encouraging news for homeowners wishing to undertake renovations, special considerations must be made to ensure that low-income consumers are protected from disconnection in the event that they default on their utility bill.

Despite aggressive conservation, electricity rates are expected to rise. This is especially troubling for low-income consumers who are vulnerable to increases in shelter and utility costs and will be forced to make difficult choices between heating, eating and paying the rent.

"What is required is a long-term, proactive solution that will help keep the lights on for low-income households in the province," said Zee Bhanji, Coordinator of LIEN. "We have been advocating for a permanent, province-wide low-income electricity rate assistance program since 2006."

The Ontario government has shown leadership in greening the electricity system and spurring a healthy renewable energy sector. We hope they continue this leadership by ensuring that progress is made on establishing a rate affordability program targeted to low-income consumers.

LIEN is a network of anti-poverty, affordable housing, environmental and social justice organizations that works to address the needs of Ontario's low-income households by ensuring the implementation of effective energy assistance and conservation programs and policies.

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**For further information:**

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