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Subject: LIEN media release re.: Ontario Cutting Electricity Bills by 25 Per Cent

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<http://www.lowincomeenergy.ca/news-events/2017/03/vulnerable-ontarians-to-see-significant-reductions-in-their-electricity-bills/>

For immediate release:

March 2, 2017

Vulnerable Ontarians to see significant reductions in their electricity bills

(Toronto) The Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN) welcomed the measures announced today in the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan which will provide households with an average 25 per cent reduction on their electricity costs, while low-income, northern and rural households will receive an even bigger reduction.

“Access to electricity is a necessity, not a luxury,” said Zee Bhanji, LIEN Coordinator. “Ontarians should not be forced to make difficult choices about whether to keep the lights and heat on, or pay for rent, food, medicine, clothing, transportation and other basic necessities.”

Under the enhanced Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), low-income families will benefit from a 50 per cent increase in the monthly on-bill credits. In addition, the OESP credit will be available to more households. This will make a real difference for these Ontarians struggling to pay their bills.

Energy choices are limited in rural and northern Ontario, where there is a reliance on electricity for space heating and water heating. Access to water is effectively denied when those households have their electricity disconnected since water pumps cannot work without power. The expansion of the Rural and Remote Rate Protection program (RRRP) – the funding for which was doubled by the Ontario government last month - from about 350,000 to over 800,000 consumers will bring much needed relief for those paying very high distribution rates.

On-reserve First Nations residential electricity consumers will have their delivery charge on their bills removed completely.

LIEN has been working for more than 12 years with the provincial government on putting together the components of an energy poverty strategy. The Ontario Fair Hydro Plan builds on what has been achieved to date, ensuring sustained and effective electricity service affordability for low-income and other vulnerable Ontarians.

“These measures, together with the current low-income rate mitigation programs will make a substantial difference in the lives of vulnerable Ontarians,” said Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association and LIEN steering committee member.

LIEN looks forward to further assisting the government, the Ontario Energy Board and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Fair Hydro Plan, which is expected to be in place by this summer.

For more information including interviews with a LIEN representative, please contact:

Zee Bhanji, LIEN Coordinator
416-597-5855 ext. 5167

About LIEN

The Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN) was formed in 2004 by anti-poverty, affordable housing and environmental groups in response to the impact of rising energy prices on low-income Ontarians. LIEN promotes programs and policies which tackle the problems of energy poverty and homelessness, reduce Ontario's contribution to smog and climate change, and promote a healthy economy through the more efficient use of energy, a transition to renewable sources of energy, education and consumer protection.

Zee Bhanji

Coordinator
Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN)
c/o Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)

**** Please note that we have moved. Our new address is listed below. Our telephone and fax numbers remain the same****

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