

Approved Meeting Minutes



OEB Financial Assistance Working Group

Meeting Date: September 2, 2010 **Time:** 9:30 am – 4:00 pm

Location: 2300 Yonge Street, 25th Floor, ADR room

Attendees: **Financial Assistance Working Group:**

Julie Girvan	Consumers Council Canada (CCC)
Gord Eamer	Cornerstone Hydro Electric Concepts (CHEC)
Svetlana Diomin	Direct Energy
Manny Sousa	Enbridge Gas Distribution
Mary Anne Rowlands	Housing Help Association of Ontario
Barb Allen	Hydro One Networks
Jennifer Lopinski	Low Income Energy Network (LIEN)
William Harper	VECC / Energy Probe
Shayma Saadat	Ministry of Energy
John Bagnall	Neighbourhood Information Post
Kristi Billing	United Way Toronto
David Stevens	Smart Sub-Metering Working Group
Debra Johnston	Salvation Army
Mark Kitchen	Union Gas
Steve Lavery	United Way Toronto
Chris Goethel	Ministry of Energy
Jack Lenartowicz	Coalition of Large Distributors
Kevin Monte de Ramos	Ontario Power Authority

Board Staff:

Alison Cazalet, Takis Plagiannakos, Stephen Vetsis

Guiding Principles

- Board staff reviewed guiding principles established in previous FAWG meetings.
- Working group discussed if any changes were required and identified the following elements:
 - Highlight that LEAP is funded through distribution rates.

- Guidelines should highlight that other funding sources should be considered.
- Use the term rate classes/payers instead of all customers to avoid confusion.
- Add that smart sub-metering customers should be covered by LEAP.

Eligibility and Screening

- Board staff presented the eligibility and screening criteria developed in previous working group meeting.
- Criteria were discussed by the working group and the following consensus was reached:
 - LICO + 15%, being a customer of a utility and residing at a household with an account in arrears were deemed to be the required criteria for qualifying for LEAP.
 - Service agencies were to use their expertise/discretion to consider the following factors when evaluating applicants:
 - Threat of disconnection.
 - Customer showed prior attempt to pay.
 - Likelihood that LEAP funds will maintain connection.
 - Access to LEAP funds more than once a year up to a cap.
 - A guideline for applying these discretionary criteria should be provided in the Program Manual.
- The working group also agreed to a \$500 cap on funds per LEAP participant.
 - Service agencies can use their discretion to increase that amount up to \$600 when an applicant's home is electrically heated.
 - In cases where large sums of money are owed by an applicant, he or she should also be referred to a conservation program where appropriate.

Intake and Program Administration

- Board staff presented previous FAWG recommendations regarding intake and program administration.
- Working group discussed selection of intake agencies, sources of referrals, training and issues regarding the administration of the LEAP program.
- The working group agreed that the OEB should prepare and provide training for the LEAP program in the form of webcasts in late 2010 (November/December).

Funding

- Board staff outlined state of discussions on program/administration costs for service agencies and level of funding provided by distributors from previous consultation.
- Working group discussed appropriate levels of program/administration costs of lead/intake agencies.
- The working group agreed to allot 15% of LEAP funds for program/administration costs for 2011 and to revisit this amount in 1-2 years once more information is available.
 - Costs will be provided to lead agency who will then redistribute funds to the intake agency. Agencies will negotiate amounts.
- It was also acknowledged that contributions to LEAP from non-ratepayer sources are voluntary. If funds are earmarked specifically for LEAP, then the LEAP

framework applies. Contributors may also earmark the funds for other purposes, in which case it is outside the framework of LEAP.

Tracking and Reporting

- Board staff distributed a proposed set of tracking and reporting requirements to working group for discussion.
- Working group considered reporting requirements for all parties as well as what information was necessary for collection.
- Participants agreed on the following:
 - Demographic information should be tracked to allow for the evaluation and improvement of the LEAP. To be reported annually by lead agencies to utilities.
 - Utilities require bi-weekly or monthly reporting of funds distributed but do not need demographic information reported on a regular basis.
 - Reporting requirements should not be redundant or excessive for service agencies or utilities.

Promotion and Outreach

- Working group discussed options and roles for promotion and outreach of the LEAP.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Working group revisited the roles and responsibilities discussed in previous consultation.

Action Items:

- FAWG participants to consider reasonable criteria for appropriate service agencies for LEAP to be considered in a future working group meeting.
- United Way of Toronto and the Salvation Army to provide a mapping of service agencies administering Winter Warmth to utilities for next working group meeting to provide an idea of the current network that is established and which utilities will need to find their own service agencies to administer LEAP.
- OEB staff to prepare a draft of the LEAP Program Manual for discussion at next FAWG meeting.
- FAWG members to consider new names for LEAP program.
- United Way of Toronto to investigate possibility of linking LEAP with Winter Warmth program.

Next Scheduled Meeting:

- September 16, 2010