SEP - 8 2009

Mr. Howard I. Wetston, QC
Chair
Ontario Energy Board
PO Box 2319
2300 Yonge Street
Toronto ON M4P 1E4

Dear Mr. Wetston:

The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure is in the process of planning to implement a provincewide integrated program for low-income energy consumers as we move forward with the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009 (GEA).

As you may be aware, the ministry has commissioned the Canadian Council on Social Development to report on the profile of the low-income sector in Ontario and deliver recommendations regarding the implementation of a low-income program that aligns with the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the GEA. This report will provide useful background information to consider in the development of Ontario’s new plans.

I am writing to ensure that the Ontario Energy Board is aware of these plans and request that matters related to new support programs for low-income energy consumers not be put in place in advance of a ministerial direction.

I am aware of and pleased with the thoroughness of the Board’s own examination of the various issues pertaining to low-income energy consumers in Ontario, which has identified barriers to participation and delivery of low-income energy programs in the province and endeavoured to build consensus among stakeholders about how to move forward to overcome these barriers. I invite the Board to brief me on the Low-income Energy Assistance working groups’ findings and have asked my staff to contact the Board to arrange this.

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It is my expectation that we will build on the work already completed through the low-income consultations the Board held in September 2008, as well as the work of the Low-income Energy Assistance working groups this summer. We will continue to consult with stakeholders including utilities, non-governmental organizations, municipalities and social service agencies to gather the perspectives needed to successfully implement the provincial program.

I look forward to working together on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

George Smitherman
Deputy Premier, Minister